**PLUS:** Your Guide to Summer Fun!

JUNE 2015 | SIKIDS.com

# Sports Illustrated KIDS

# THE AVENGERS

*Four years after a heartbreaking defeat, the U.S. is off to Canada to reclaim the Women's World Cup*

From left: Alex Morgan, captain Christie Rampone, and Abby Wambach

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# LINEUP

JUNE 2015
VOLUME 27
NUMBER 5

Photograph by
JOE CARTER FILMS/
PADDLE BATTLE

## SUMMER FUN

**29** School's finally out! Whether you're chilling at home or hitting the road, we've got you covered. Here's how to make the most of your time off.

***PADDLE READY***
You don't have to be a pro to take part in the Third Annual Nonantum Resort Paddle Battle in Maine, a 1.7-mile dash that's fun for all ages.

**16 PRIME TIME** Karl-Anthony Towns helped Kentucky to a near-perfect record. Now he could go first in the NBA draft.

**20 KRIS BRYANT** After months of buildup, the 23-year-old is playing for the Chicago Cubs – and looking good.

**36 WOMEN'S WORLD CUP** Abby Wambach and Team USA have one goal this summer: to avenge a defeat in the 2011 World Cup.

**34 HOMESPUN SPORTS** We asked you for your best original summertime games. Here are our favorites.

**40 FATHER'S DAY** They already shared a passion for the game, but for three years Ron and R.J. Hunter worked toward the same goal – and it was pretty special.

**42 UGLY UNIFORMS** You sent us the ugliest uniforms you could imagine. They were amazing!

**FROM THE PAGES OF *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED***

**44 JAYSON TATUM** The top basketball player in the class of 2016 could stay close to his family – and his favorite pizza – in St. Louis, Missouri.

**COVER**
John Todd/isiphotos.com (3)
Photo Composition by
SI Premedia

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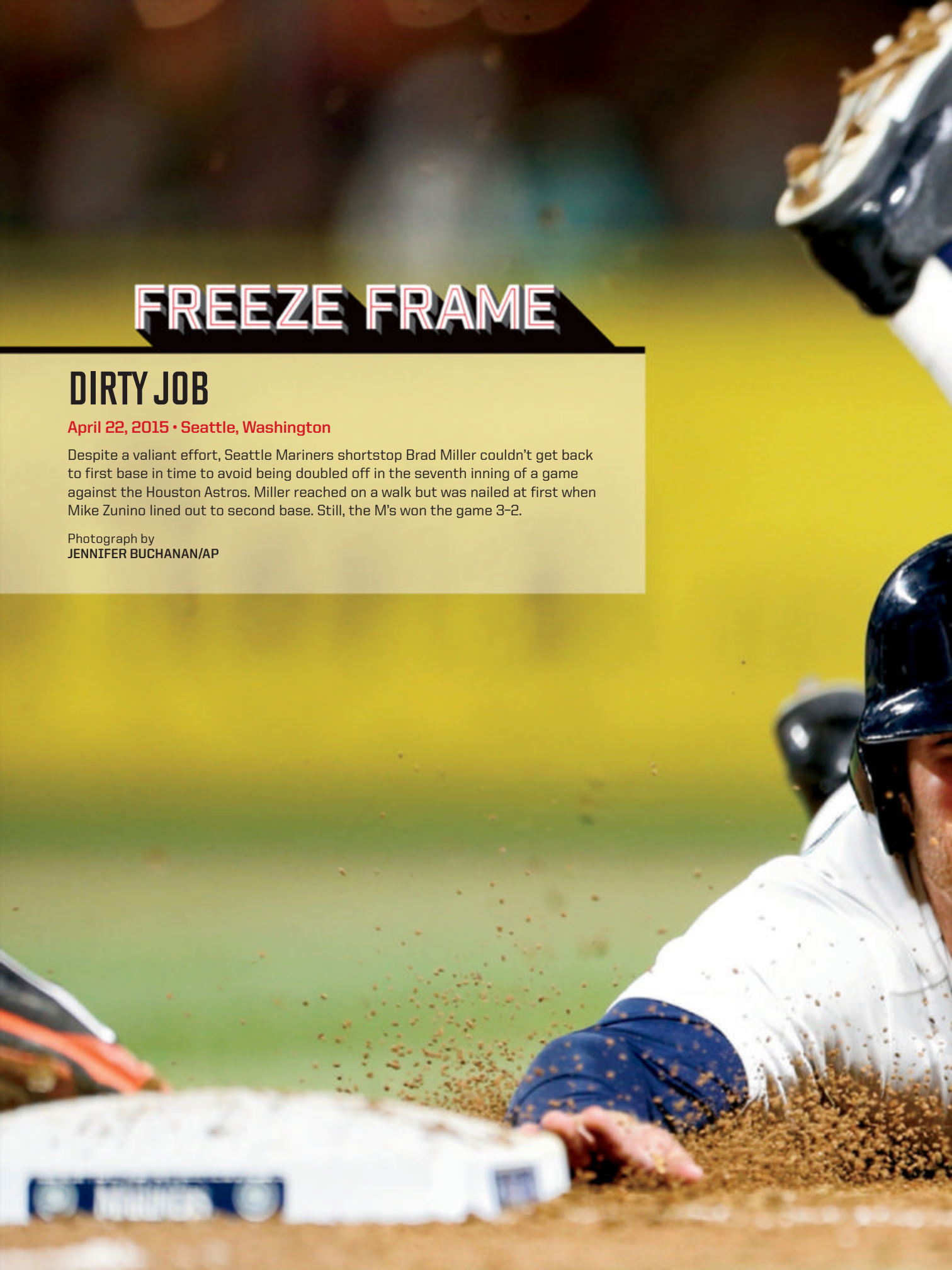

# FREEZE FRAME

## DIRTY JOB

**April 22, 2015 • Seattle, Washington**

Despite a valiant effort, Seattle Mariners shortstop Brad Miller couldn't get back to first base in time to avoid being doubled off in the seventh inning of a game against the Houston Astros. Miller reached on a walk but was nailed at first when Mike Zunino lined out to second base. Still, the M's won the game 3–2.

Photograph by
**JENNIFER BUCHANAN/AP**

SEATTLE
MARINERS

NITRO
CIRCUS
NITRO
CIRCUS

# FREEZE FRAME

## HEAD OVER WHEELS

**April 28, 2015 • Davidsonville, Maryland**

As this sequence shows, 29-year-old Josh Sheehan of Australia flipped . . . and flipped, and flipped again, becoming the first motocross rider to land a triple backflip. In order to get the momentum he needed, Sheehan had to reach a speed of around 60 mph before he took off.

Photograph by
**MARC SEROTA FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED**

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BURNING QUESTION

# SHOULD THERE BE A DH?

**ST. LOUIS CARDINALS** ace Adam Wainwright was, at long last, healthy. He had major elbow surgery that caused him to miss all of the 2011 season. When he finally returned, in 2013, he led the National League in games started and innings pitched. His arm seemed as good as new.

The good news is that Wainwright's elbow is still in great shape. The bad news is that his ankle is a mess. On April 25, Wainwright ruptured his Achilles tendon running to first base after hitting a ground ball. He'll miss the rest of the season.

Two days earlier, another high-priced National League ace got hurt in the batter's box. Max Scherzer, who signed a $210 million contract with the Washington Nationals before the season, sprained his thumb hitting a ball on a cold afternoon. He left the game early and missed his next start.

Their injuries brought an age-old question back to the forefront: Should pitchers hit?

The American League introduced the designated hitter on January 11, 1973. Baseball purists have been complaining about it ever since January 12, 1973. The National League has never adopted the rule, letting pitchers continue to bat. Scherzer weighed in on the debate when he told CBS Sports, "Who would people rather see hit: Big Papi [Boston Red Sox slugger David Ortiz] or me? Who would people rather see, a real hitter hitting home runs or a pitcher swinging a wet newspaper?"

He had a point. Last year, designated hitters walloped 368 home runs with a .419 slugging percentage. Pitchers hit 15 homers and slugged .152.

But not everyone agreed. "What if he got hurt pitching? Should we say we can't pitch anymore?" said San Francisco Giants ace Madison Bumgarner. "I hate what happened to him. He works his butt off out there. But I don't think it was because he was hitting. What if he gets hurt getting out of his truck? You tell him not to drive anymore?"

Baseball isn't the only sport that has seen a debate over whether or not players who aren't good at something should be excused from doing it. In the regular season and again in the first round of the NBA playoffs, the San Antonio Spurs employed the "Hack-a-Jordan" strategy on Los Angeles Clippers center DeAndre Jordan. The Spurs consistently fouled Jordan, hoping that the poor free throw shooter would miss from the line. (In one game Jordan went to

***WALKING WOUNDED*** All-Star pitcher Wainwright injured himself running, not throwing.

JEFFREY PHELPS/AP

the free throw line 28 times. He missed 18, but the Clippers still won.)

Before long, there was a debate raging over whether or not rules should be instituted to make the ploy less effective. One suggestion was to allow the Clippers to send another player to shoot for Jordan. Sound familiar? It's the DH for basketball.

The argument for such a rule is basically the same one Scherzer made: Watching DeAndre Jordan clang free throw after free throw off the rim is about as fun to watch as a pitcher whiffing on three pitches (or the pitcher taking his pre-game nap).

So should we eliminate everything in sports that's not fun to watch? Should we excuse players who aren't good at something from having to try it? Should the NL have a DH?

No.

Because where does it end? Overweight football linemen no longer have to run? (Maybe they can use those Razr scooters.) Hockey goalies no longer have to handle the puck? (They could clear it down ice with the T-shirt cannon.) Should NFL teams with bad kickers be allowed to throw the ball through the uprights?

There's something to be said for watching athletes perform at an elite level. And it's true, you don't go to a baseball game to see Clayton Kershaw hit, just like you don't go to a Will Ferrell movie for the plot. But there's also something refreshing about seeing an athlete work to improve, to thrive in every part of his game.

San Antonio's Tim Duncan told Jordan the fouling would stop when he started hitting free throws. Jordan's response? "I've just got to continue to work and put my reps in."

**On SIKIDS.com we asked if the National League should adopt the designated hitter rule.**

**You said:**

YES 60%

NO 40%

Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw, who hit .175 last year.

SPORTS GAMER

# BACKYARD BALLER

## Stephen Curry loves to score inside, outside, and outdoors

*by John Gaudiosi*

Stephen Curry may be a big-time NBA star, but the point guard has never lost his love of playing hoops in the backyard. That's why he was a perfect choice for the cover of *Backyard Sports NBA Basketball 2015*.

The free mobile game connects with a toy basket (the Mega Morph Super Hoop), which gives players power-up QR codes for the game when they make real-life buckets. There's also a line of Mojo wristbands that can be worn on the playground; they produce codes that unlock exclusive NBA players when scanned.

Curry spoke with SI KIDS about the title and his love of video games growing up.

**Q. What's your favorite *Backyard Sports* memory from playing the classic games?**

**A.** My brother, Seth, and I would play baseball against each other for hours. We loved the old school chants: "We want a batter, not a broken ladder."

**Q. How did you balance real sports and video games growing up?**

**A.** I always tried to get out on the basketball court as my main priority, just because it was fun to actually go out and play with my friends and family. Then I used video games as my downtime. It was a way for me to still be involved with the sport while resting at my own house.

**Q. What separates this sports video game franchise from *NBA 2K*, *NBA Live*, and other basketball franchises?**

**A.** It's more realistic for kids to play in a backyard recess environment than on a professional NBA court. Times spent playing with kids around the neighborhood were a lot of my first memories regarding sports, and the *Backyard Sports* franchise does an awesome job of simulating that.

DAVID DENNIS/ICON SPORTSWIRE (KERSHAW); COURTESY OF BACKYARD SPORTS (GAME)

WATCH

# THE COLLEGE WORLD SERIES

*(June 13–23/24; ESPN, ESPN2; check listings)*

ALEX BREGMAN

WALKER BUEHLER

Are you ready to watch some of the best college players in the U.S. play in one of the most historic and family-friendly sporting events in the country? Are you ready to hear that glorious *ping* sound every time a player's bat makes contact with a ball? Of course you are. This year, for the 66th time, baseball fans — and lovers of metal bats — will travel to Omaha, Nebraska, to watch the top eight NCAA teams in the country play for the national championship. And *you* can watch all the action on TV.

How do teams make it to Omaha? First, they have to win their regional, a mini-tournament hosted by 16 schools each year. Four teams play at each regional (that's 64 total), but only one school advances from each site. It's double elimination, meaning if you lose twice, you're out!

Then comes the super regional round: Eight schools host eight other schools, and they all play best-of-three series (which also means if you lose twice, you're out). The eight winners head to Omaha for more double-elimination action. Finally, only two teams will be left. Those teams play a best-of-three series. Last year, flamethrower Walker Buehler and Vanderbilt beat Virginia in three games to win the Commodores' first men's NCAA title. Three schools have won back-to-back titles over the last 20 years, so it can be done. One of those teams was LSU (1996 and '97), which boasts another hot major league prospect, shortstop Alex Bregman. Watch to see who'll bring home the hardware.

## The French Open

*(Quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals: June 2–7, check listings)*

The clay court tournament begins on May 19, but when June rolls around, the biggest matches will be yet to come. Maria Sharapova *(below)*, who won her second French Open last year, will aim to plant another wet one on the trophy. As far as the men are concerned, the title is Rafael Nadal's to lose. He has dominated the event, winning nine out of the last 10.

## The Adidas Grand Prix

*(June 13, 1–3 p.m., NBC)*

Usain Bolt *(right)*, known as the world's fastest man for his ownership of the 100-meter world record, will race solo in the U.S. for the first time in seven years. (He ran a relay in 2010.) The 28-year-old Bolt, who has won six Olympic gold medals for Jamaica, will join some of the globe's best track and field athletes at Icahn Stadium in New York City.

## JUNE BIRTHDAYS

**2** ▶ Vancouver Canucks winger **Chris Higgins** celebrates his 32nd birthday.

**6** New York Giants cornerback **Prince Amukamara** is 26.

**9** Forward **Udonis Haslem** of the Miami Heat turns 35.

**10** Atlanta Hawks point guard **Jeff Teague** is 27.

**14** ▶ Buffalo Bills wide receiver **Sammy Watkins** celebrates his 22nd birthday.

**16** Milwaukee Brewers relief pitcher **Jonathan Broxton** turns 31.

**17** ▶ Seven-time Grand Slam champion tennis player **Venus Williams** is 35.

**18** San Diego Chargers tight end **Antonio Gates** celebrates his 35th birthday.

**19** ▶ Forward **Dirk Nowitzki** of the Dallas Mavericks turns 37.

**22** Detroit Tigers second baseman **Ian Kinsler** is 33.

**24** ▶ FC Barcelona forward **Lionel Messi** turns 28.

**26** Guard **Iman Shumpert** of the Cleveland Cavaliers celebrates his 25th birthday.

VASHA HUNT/AL.COM/LANDOV (BREGMAN); VANDERBILT ATHLETICS (BUEHLER); BOB MARTIN FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (SHARAPOVA); BUDA MENDES/GETTY IMAGES (BOLT); JEFF VINNICK/NHLI/GETTY IMAGES (HIGGINS); BILL WIPPERT/AP (WATKINS); WARREN LITTLE/GETTY IMAGES (WILLIAMS); GLENN JAMES/NBAE/GETTY IMAGES (NOWITZKI); DAVID RAMOS/GETTY IMAGES (MESSI)

DIFFERENCE MAKERS

# MAKING CHANGE

Seventh-grader **ANNA MURPHY** raises money to help keep families in her hometown warm.

**ANNA MURPHY'S FAMILY ALWAYS** collected pennies to help pay the heating bills of struggling people in their hometown of Stafford Springs, Connecticut. Even when Anna's father lost his job, her parents made sure the practice continued.

"We were trying to teach the kids that giving to other people was still important," says Anna's mom, Rebecca. "It wasn't necessarily what we received, but what we could give to others."

The lesson got through to Anna, who took the idea back to school with her. She led her fourth-grade class in doing chores to fund-raise for more families struggling to pay their heating bills.

Anna, a soccer player, is now 13 years old, and her class project has grown with her into a full-fledged charity called Warming Families Makes Cents. So far, it has managed to raise over $15,000, helping 30 families stay warm over the past four winters.

That success comes from a variety of initiatives, including collection buckets in local businesses and a 5K race. Going forward, Anna hopes to help more families in Stafford Springs (her goal is 100 in the next few years), while expanding Warming Families Makes Cents to other states.

To learn more and donate, visit **warmingfamiliesmakescents.com**.

Cleveland Cavaliers Point Guard

## KYRIE IRVING'S FAVORITE THINGS

**FOOD**
Macaroni and Cheese

**CARTOON CHARACTERS**
Phineas and Ferb

**MOVIE**
*He Got Game*

**VIDEO GAME**
*Call of Duty*

**SPORTS TEAM AS A KID**
New Jersey Nets

**ATHLETE GROWING UP**
Kobe Bryant

**SUBJECT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL**
Math

**ANIMAL**
Cheetah

**MUSICIAN/ BAND**
Chris Brown

*Interview by Kid Reporter Patrick Andres*

COURTESY OF TODD LEVESQUE (MURPHY); AL TIELEMANS FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (IRVING); LAURI PATTERSON/GETTY IMAGES (MAC AND CHEESE); THE DISNEY CHANNEL/PHOTOFEST (PHINEAS AND FERB); BUENA VISTA PHOTOFEST (MOVIE POSTER); JOHN W. MCDONOUGH FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (BRYANT); PETER ANDERSON/DORLING KINDERSLEY/GETTY IMAGES (CHEETAH); JOHN RICARD/GETTY IMAGES (BROWN)

Do you have a question for the Professor? Email us at **SIKIDS.com/Professor**.

# PROFESSOR OF SPORTS

**Q. In games played in Toronto, is it easier for players to hit home runs when the roof is open or closed?**
– Darryl, 11, Detroit

***The Prof Says:*** When the roof at Rogers Centre is closed, it becomes an indoor stadium. And according to Alan Nathan, a retired physics professor at the University of Illinois who now spends his time studying baseball, "The thing about an indoor stadium is that it is more or less immune to variations in air density or wind."

Wind can both help and hurt players, depending on whether it is blowing in or out of the stadium. But air density has a much more predictable impact. The lower the air density, the less drag there is on a ball passing through the air. So the ball will fly farther. Since density is inversely related to temperature – because air expands as it heats up – a ball will travel farther in warmer weather.

According to Nathan, each 10-degree jump in temperature would equate to about 2½ feet on a fly ball. "That could be the difference between a home run and a ball that's caught in front of the fence," he says.

In 2014 the Blue Jays played 34 home games under the dome and 47 in the open air. In the perfect, 68-degree air-conditioned indoor version, there was an average of 2.6 home runs per game. But in the seven games played outside when the temperature was 77 degrees or higher, that average went up to 3.4.

So if the weather is chilly outside, you'd be better off slugging indoors. But if the sun is beating down, it's time to get out there and swing for the fences.

ILLSUTRATION BY MARK MATCHO; TOM SZCZERBOWSKI/GETTY IMAGES (ROGERS CENTRE)

ON OUR RADAR

# MICHAEL ZIMMERMAN

**HEIGHT:** 6'3"

**BIRTHPLACE:** MIAMI, FLORIDA

**BIRTH DATE:** AUGUST 13, 1996

**SPORT:** BASEBALL

■ On March 24, Michael pitched his first career no-hitter in Gulf Coast High School's 3–0 win over the Riverdale Raiders. In the very next game, he threw a perfect game when the Sharks defeated Mariner High School 5–0.

■ Michael, who has a 91-mph fastball, led the Sharks (20–7) to the playoffs while recording a 1.29 ERA, 90 strikeouts, and a .875 win percentage.

■ Perfect Game USA named the 18-year-old second-team All-America and first-team All-Region in Florida. He has committed to play baseball for the University of Florida.

■ Michael was one baserunner away from becoming the third high school pitcher in U.S. history to throw back-to-back perfect games this spring.

## SPORTSKIDS OF THE MONTH

### BOBBY KLEIN, 6

**Levittown, PA**
**QUARTER MIDGET RACING**

Bobby finished second at the USAC National Phoenixville race last June and came in third at the South Jersey QMA race in October. The second grader ended the 2014 season with six rookie class first-place finishes.

### TYLER PIZZANO, 7

**Salem, NH**
**HOCKEY**

Tyler, a second grader, produced 62 goals and 32 assists for the New York Jets in the Mite Minor Elite Division this season. The leftwinger also recorded nine hat tricks during his team's 40-game season.

### ZOE SKIRBOLL, 10

**Aspinwall, PA**
**SWIMMING**

At the NASA Showcase Classic in April, Zoe broke the 10-and-under 100-yard freestyle national record (54.89) and tied the 50-yard free record (24.90). In the same month, she also won all six events at the Eastern Zone All-Star Championships.

**ARE YOU A SPORTSKID?**

If you think you have what it takes to be a SportsKid of the Month, submit your nomination at: **SIKIDS.com/Contests/SportsKid**

HEINZ KLUETMEIER FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (ZIMMERMAN)

Submit your caption at **SIKIDS.com/Contests**. Your entry could appear in a future issue of the magazine.

# FUNNY PHOTO

The winning caption as voted on SIKIDS.com:

**"DID I HEAR 'BIRDIE'? THAT SOUNDS DELICIOUS!"**

— ARTIE, 12, NEW YORK

**"Tiger Woods? More like Gator Woods."**
– Charles, 13, Connecticut

**"Where's Happy Gilmore?"**
– Tallie, 11, New Hampshire

**"Now should I use my putter tail or my chipper tail?"**
– Jake, 12, Idaho

**"So that's where my egg went!"**
– Tim, 12, Tennessee

**"I'm taking mini golf to a whole new level!"**
– Zach, 12, Texas

**"I wonder if I made the 'What's the Call?' page?"**
– Finn, 10, Rhode Island

**SOUND OFF**

## What was your favorite summer activity as a kid?

"Going to summer camp. Every summer from the ages of nine to 12, I went to day camp in Baltimore, Maryland, and we would do different activities like swimming, skating, playing basketball, or dodgeball. It was a great way to meet new friends."
**ANGEL MCCOUGHTRY**
Atlanta Dream guard/forward

"Going to a beautiful beach spot in Mexico on the Sea of Cortez and fishing off a boat. It was what we did as a family."
**ADRIAN GONZALEZ**
Los Angeles Dodgers first baseman*

"I loved going to the water park in Virginia Beach, 35 minutes from my house. I got braver: I went from the little slides that were about 10 feet above the water, and as I got older I started going in the one that sent you down at 40 miles an hour. We'd go once a summer if I was lucky. It was a special thing, with family and friends."
**MICHAEL CUDDYER**
New York Mets outfielder

"My grandparents had a farm in central Missouri about an hour away from where I lived, and I used to go there all the time. I loved being outside and playing with the animals and going fishing and getting dirty, just being a kid. We got to ride the horses."
**BRAD DAVIS**
Houston Dynamo midfielder

*Gonzalez interview by Kid Reporter Brian Yancelson*



MYAKKA PINES GOLF CLUB/EPA (FUNNY PHOTO); TODD KIRKLAND/AP (CUDDYER); SCOTT CUNNINGHAM/NBAE/GETTY (MCCOUGHTRY); BOB LEVEY/AP (DAVIS); CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES (GONZALEZ)

***ON THE RISE***
According to NBA draft consultant Ryan Blake, Towns, who could be taken first overall, "has great confidence and length that will help him make an impact with the team that drafts him."

Photograph by
**David E. Klutho for Sports Illustrated**

# Karl-Anthony TOWNS

**POSITION**
Forward-center

**SPOTLIGHT**
The SEC Freshman of the Year helped power the Wildcats to a near-perferct record in his only season at Kentucky. Now the versatile big man could be the top pick in this month's NBA draft.

**BY CHRISTINA M. TAPPER**

You may know him as the skilled rim protector who is getting ready for the NBA. But 12 years ago, players on the Piscataway (New Jersey) Tech High School boys varsity basketball team knew Karl-Anthony Towns as the seven-year-old whose free throw shooting determined whether or not they would end their three-hour practices with sprints. Towns, who participated in the team's drills after school, was tasked with making seven consecutive free throws by his father, Karl Sr., who was the team's coach. If little Karl missed, the players had to run up and down the court seven times. "I was making more than I was missing. But there were some days I did miss a lot," Towns laughingly remembers. "It was bad for the team."

Make or miss, the charity stripe experience prepared Towns for future trips to the line as a 6'11", 250-pound forward for the Kentucky Wildcats. "Moments like that gave me the ability to face any type of pressure," the 19-year-old says. "When I go up to the free throw line or take the last shot of a game, I have no worries."

Towns showed no signs of worry when he sank all seven of his free throws, including two big ones with 1:05 left, to lift UK over Florida in February. He didn't fret when he scored 25 points and nailed 5 of 6 shots from the stripe as Kentucky escaped with an Elite Eight win versus Notre Dame in this year's NCAA tournament either.

Free throw shooting isn't Towns' only strong suit. A shot-blocking,

rebound-grabbing force, he is a solid back-to-the-basket low-post scorer. Towns can face up and shoot, as well as pass out of double teams with precision. The do-it-all player earned SEC Freshman of the Year and played a major part in Kentucky's near-perfect season. Now, after one year with the Wildcats, the big man has the potential to be the No. 1 pick in this month's NBA draft.

## MR. ALL-AROUND

Towns was always surrounded by basketball, thanks to his father, who was a star rebounder at Monmouth University in 1984. Towns learned basics like ballhandling and defense at Piscataway Tech practices, and he would take 1,000 jump shots almost every day. "My dad would have one of the JV players rebound for me, to speed it up," he says.

As Towns grew (he was 6' 5" in the fifth grade), he developed interests beyond the court. Before joining his father's team practices, Towns participated in an after-school art program. "We drew a lot of landscapes and sneakers," Towns says. When he wasn't palming a basketball or holding a pencil to sketch, Towns took piano lessons at school. "I used to play Maroon 5!" he says.

Towns even quit hoops for one summer, before eighth grade, to try something different: baseball. "I felt like basketball wasn't fun anymore," says Towns, who likes to golf and watch Real Madrid soccer matches too. "There was so much talk, 'Oh he's a prodigy.' The best thing for me was to get away from the game for a little bit. Then I started missing it."

Towns — who had been honing his basketball skills with his father — returned to the court, and before long he had sprouted up to 6' 9". He had trouble fitting in a school desk. ("I still do!" Towns says.) Classmates poked fun at his size, but Towns always felt comfortable in his skin. "I was raised to not allow anyone to change how I feel about myself. I just laughed with them," Towns says. "If you can do that, then you can get through the teasing."

**GLASS CLEANER** Kentucky's depth meant that Towns barely played half of each game, but he still pulled down 6.7 boards per game.

Towns's game, however, was no laughing matter. Although he had a reputation for being kind and generous, which helped him get elected as ninth-grade class president at St. Joseph High in 2012 (the same year he committed to UK), Towns crushed the competition.

As a senior, Towns averaged 20.9 points, 13.4 rebounds, and 6.2 blocks per game. He also knocked down 127 treys in his final three seasons at St. Joseph. After winning three New Jersey state titles, Towns graduated with a 3.96 grade-point average. Kentucky was getting an all-around student-athlete — one who was ready to progress even further.

## DEVELOPING STORY

When Towns arrived at UK last summer, he was no longer the go-to guy like he was at St. Joseph. Kentucky was bursting with talent, and coach John Calipari used a platoon system that limited minutes and touches for Towns. But that was no problem for him. He just adapted his game. "We already had shooters," he says. "I just knew I had to be a dominant force in the post."

As a UK assistant coach last season, Barry Rohrssen witnessed this improvement. "Even if the stats showed Karl was the best player in a game, it wasn't enough for him. He'd put in extra time at the gym to make corrections and develop more of his interior game," says Rohrssen.

Towns also spent three summers with the Dominican National Team. (His mother, Jacqueline, was born in the Dominican Republic, making him eligible for the team.) He learned about pick-and-roll defense and rebounding position from his teammate Al Horford, an Atlanta Hawks center. When Towns played

DAVID E. KLUTHO FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

against Team USA, which was loaded with NBA stars, in 2014, he went toe-to-toe with New Orleans Pelicans star Anthony Davis, a UK alum with whom Towns has been compared. "That taught me I can play with and against anybody," Towns says.

At Kentucky, Towns says basketball was "three, four times harder, physically and emotionally," than he thought it would be. Washing clothes was the other tough part of college. "Doing my laundry was definitely the biggest adjustment I had to make," Towns says. "When to use cold and when to use hot — I'm still a little fuzzy with it!"

Those difficulties didn't hamper Towns, though. His play — he averaged 10.3 points, 6.7 rebounds, and 2.3 blocks in 21.1 minutes per game — helped the Wildcats win their first 38 games. "The streak was a whirlwind. You never knew what night it was going to be — a two-point win or a 25-point win," says Towns. That didn't stop the hard work between games. He adds, "Every time we went to practice, we had no losses. But we were practicing like we lost." Title hopes and the streak were shattered by Wisconsin in the Final Four. "It was surreal that we finally got dinged."

Less than a week after the defeat, Towns declared for the NBA, as did six other Wildcats. Towns continued to attend classes at UK. He's interested in medicine and business, and he plans to get his degree from Kentucky in a few years. "My [UK] basketball career may have finished, but I want to complete my academic career here too," he says.

On the court, Towns is fine-tuning his offense and his footwork. He will also have to work on playing physically without fouling. He picked up 61 fouls in conference play, tops in the SEC. But overall, scouts love his potential and his personality. (Towns posted a thank-you note to UK fans on social media in April to show his appreciation.) "It's all about the upside, and he has that," says Ryan Blake, a scouting consultant for the NBA. "He also brings high character and knows how to share the ball, by playing in Kentucky's platoon system."

Towns is mum about which team might draft him. Could it be the Minnesota Timberwolves, where 19-year NBA veteran and fellow big man Kevin Garnett could mentor him? Or maybe the New York Knicks, the team Towns rooted for as a kid? Or perhaps the Philadelphia 76ers, where Towns could join bigs Joel Embiid and Nerlens Noel?

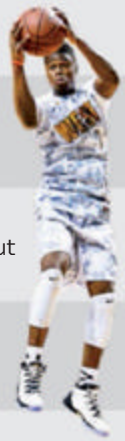
Wherever he lands, he'll be ready.

# TOP 10 DRAFT PROSPECTS

These youngsters will hear their names called early on June 25

**1 KARL-ANTHONY TOWNS** *Forward-center, Kentucky*

**2 JAHLIL OKAFOR** *Center, Duke* ▶
Okafor already has a diverse low post game and has shown flashes of a consistent face-up game, too. He'll be quite a nice consolation prize for the lottery runner-up.



**3 EMMANUEL MUDIAY** *Guard, China* ▶
Mudiay's only season in China was derailed by injury, but he's dynamic, with Russell Westbrook–like potential. He'd be a great fit with the 76ers.

**4 JUSTISE WINSLOW** *Forward, Duke*
The Lakers will have their eye on Winslow. His offensive game is raw, but there looks to be a Jimmy Butler–type player ready to be molded.

**5 KRISTAPS PORZINGIS** *Forward, Latvia*
The 7-footer has drawn comparisons to Dirk Nowitzki. He has the tools, but he'll need to add bulk to his 220-pound frame.

**6 D'ANGELO RUSSELL** *Guard, Ohio State*
He's not the most athletic point guard, but Russell makes decisions like an old pro. Sacramento Kings coach George Karl would love to get his hands on him.

**7 MARIO HEZONJA** *Guard, Croatia*
The smooth-shooting 6'8" guard could intrigue the Denver Nuggets, who are in the process of a major roster overhaul.

**8 STANLEY JOHNSON** *Forward, Arizona*
The bulky small forward (6'7", 245 pounds) is a decent three-point shooter who reminds some of Metta World Peace.

**9 FRANK KAMINSKY** *Forward-center, Wisconsin* ▶
The big man, who spent four years in college, has a refined game. He'd be a nice complement to Al Jefferson in Charlotte.

**10 MYLES TURNER** *Center, Texas*
Turner is a lanky shot-blocker with three-point potential. That makes him a hot commodity. His big shortcoming is his lack of mobility.

GREG NELSON FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (OKAFOR, KAMINSKY); RRICH GRAESSLE/ICON SPORTSWIRE (MUDIAY)

# HERE C

After months of buildup and debate, the **Kris Bryant** era has finally begun. Cubs Nation already has much to love about the hitting instructor's son (and former aspiring dentist) with teeth-rattling power.

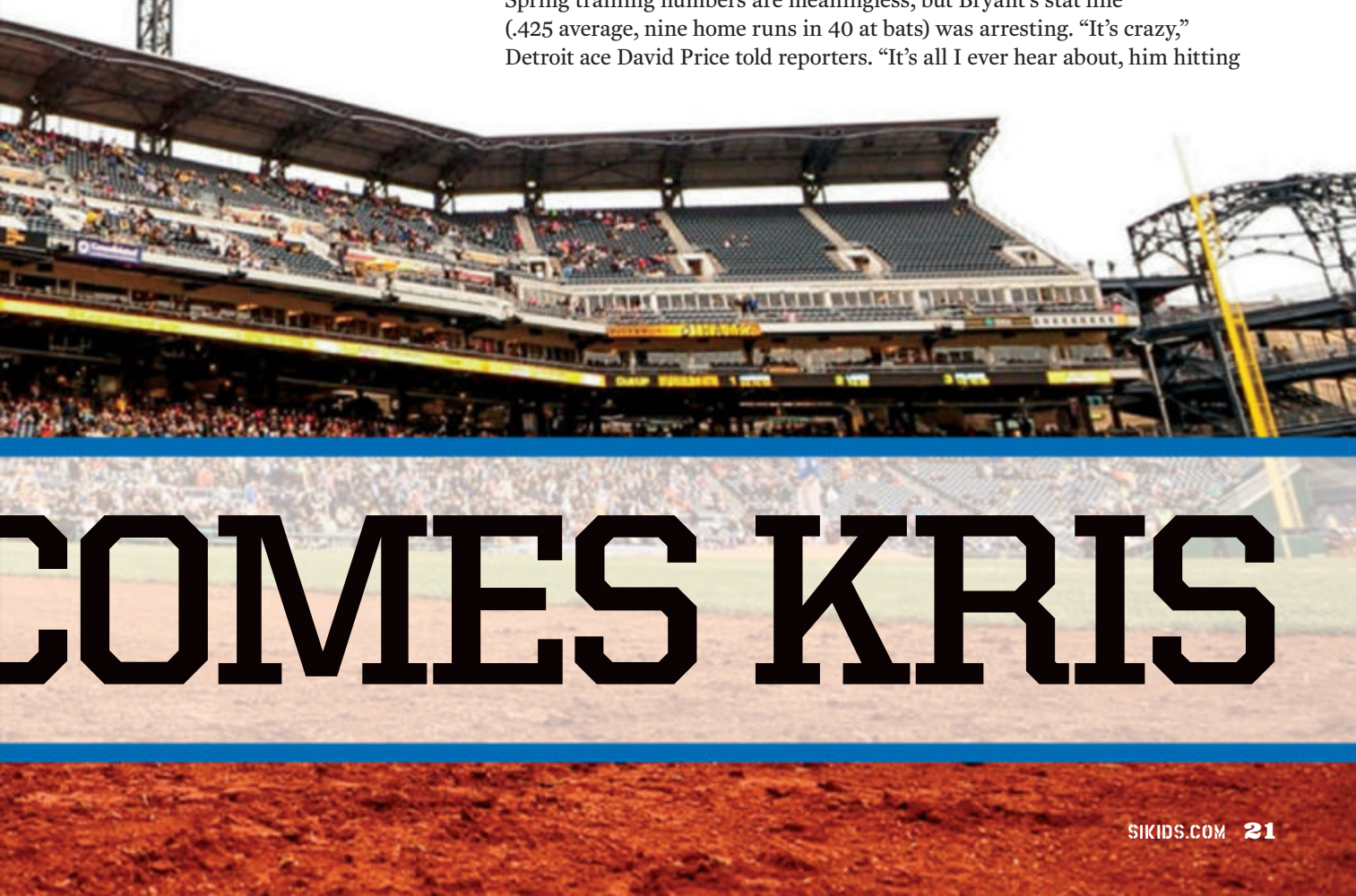
**BY ALBERT CHEN**

*Photograph by* **FRED VUICH FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED**

Kris Bryant has not seen the billboard in person, at least not in full. Sometimes while standing in the on-deck circle at Wrigley Field, he'll glimpse a sliver of it. On the billboard he's posing in his Cubs uniform, adjusting his cap, in front of a backdrop of exploding bright colors, like a superhero. "It's cool," he says, "but I'm not rushing out there to take a selfie of myself in front of . . . myself."

He is the most ballyhooed prospect since Bryce Harper, a power-hitting prodigy, the rarest of commodities in this era of fire-breathing pitchers. And yet it's almost jarring how grounded Bryant seems. In five quick years he's gone from being a straight-A student (save for a single B+ in precalculus) at Bonanza High in Las Vegas, to an aspiring dentist on the premed track at the University of San Diego, to the starting rookie third baseman and cleanup hitter for the Cubs. The 23-year-old looks younger than he does on the field. He is towering and wiry-strong (6' 5", 215 pounds), but he doesn't have gym-built muscles. ("I don't like to lift," he says, "I'm more focused on the skill aspect of the game than, well, looking good.") He is quick with a smile and a big laugh, and his face — long, dimpled, blue-eyed — is a lot friendlier than it is when he stands in the batter's box, waiting to unleash what many expect will soon be the most intimidating home run swing in baseball.

He was the No. 2 overall pick in the 2013 draft, was granted the largest signing bonus in Cubs history ($6.7 million), and he was *Baseball America*'s minor league player of the year in 2014 after mashing 43 homers across two levels. But it wasn't until this spring that Bryant's legend really spread. Spring training numbers are meaningless, but Bryant's stat line (.425 average, nine home runs in 40 at bats) was arresting. "It's crazy," Detroit ace David Price told reporters. "It's all I ever hear about, him hitting



# COMES KRIS

another homer, and another." After the Cubs' controversial decision to send Bryant to the minors to start the season, he was called up from Triple A Iowa on April 17, an event — Kris-Mas Day, as it was hailed online — that ignited three times the average volume of tickets traded the day before a Cubs home game.

"All the attention, it's ridiculous, and to be honest, kind of not fair for him," says Cubs first baseman Anthony Rizzo. "But he's the right person to handle it. He has the right mind-set. And so far, he's showing everyone that he's worth every bit of that hype."

"They say you have to give something to get something," says Bryant, **"AND I GIVE THE STRIKEOUTS FOR THE POWER NUMBERS."**

## Learning to Hit

In the spring of 1980, Mike Bryant was a wide-eyed 21-year-old Red Sox prospect. Massachusetts-born, the outfielder was in minor league camp with the franchise he grew up rooting for, assigned to work with a cantankerous former player turned instructor with a bit of a reputation. His name was Ted Williams.

"You're late," the Hall of Famer and Red Sox legend said when Bryant showed up on his first day. Bryant was confused: He was 10 minutes early. "If you're not a half hour early," Williams barked, "then you're late."

This was the first of many lessons Mike Bryant learned from Williams over the two years he spent in the Red Sox' organization, before he was cut. "I was crushed," says Bryant, who would devote the rest of his life to figuring out why he was never the best player on the field.

Now Bryant is a private hitting instructor in Las Vegas, where he and wife Susie moved a few years after his playing days were over. And Williams's philosophies remain at the core of his teaching. In the indoor batting cage attached to the modest house where Bryant gives his lessons, Williams's book *The Science of Hitting* sits on a table. The book emphasized Williams's belief that power came from rotating the hips and shoulders, and it stressed the importance of making contact with the bat traveling slightly upward. "Hit the ball in the air. It shouldn't be radical, but kids are taught to hit the ball on the ground," says Bryant. "They just talk about swinging down on the ball, hitting the top of the ball. It's stupid and wrong. And it's something I hammered into Kris from the very beginning."

"I still think about it all the time," Kris says. "When I've had a few 0-for-3 days in a row, I'll get a text from him, and without looking at it, I know what it says: Hit it in the air."

The beauty of Bryant's game is in his swing: From a low, wide stance, he unfurls with a quiet whip, without a leg kick or a long follow-through. The impact of the bat on the ball sounds like a gunshot.

It is his baseball intelligence, however, that sets Bryant apart. Cubs manager Joe Maddon calls it Bryant's ability to "organize the strike zone." Last season at Double A Tennessee, Bryant had a .281 average with five home runs in April. That's a good month by most players' standards, but not the Bryants'.

"Kris was not satisfied," says Mike, "so I put him in the pitcher's shoes: He gets ahead [in the count] and expands the strike zone, and gets the hitter to chase [a bad pitch]. I said, 'Wait for a pitch you can hit hard. It might be the first pitch. But if you're down 0–2, 1–2, you can still wait, because the next two pitches are going to be out of the strike zone."

Kris began seeing more pitches, "waiting for one he could drive. And when that happened," Mike says, "he just went off." Kris hit 12 home runs

JOHN LOCHER/AP (MIKE BRYANT); STEPHEN GREEN FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (FANS)

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK
Bryant's smooth swing, which has Cubs fans dreaming of brighter days ahead, was shaped by his father, Mike (far left).

in May and another 11 in June. He finished the season with the most home runs in the minors. He was compared to everyone from Cal Ripken Jr. to Miguel Cabrera.

No prospect is without flaws, of course, and if there is one thing standing between Bryant and a career as one of the best hitters of his generation, it is his propensity to swing and miss. Bryant hit .325 with a .438 on-base percentage at Double and Triple A last year — but he also whiffed 162 times in 594 plate appearances.

Bryant is very active on Twitter. (Last year, when a fan asked him if an $850 bat advertised on eBay as one of the slugger's was legit before he bought it, Bryant told him to save the money, and he sent the fan a free one). So he hears most everything that's said about him, good or bad. And he's well aware of analysts' concerns. "I was thinking about that the other day," Bryant says, "and I kind of came to this conclusion: Let's say there's a four-game series, and three games I [have at least one] strikeout, but that fourth game I go 2 for 4, I hit a home run and drive in five runs and help the team win 6–5? I'll take that. The Cubs say all the time that it's about *how* you get to your strikeouts. [Last year] I led the team in strikeouts, but I was also working the count, getting the pitch count up. My strikeouts are usually [when the count is] 2 and 2, 3 and 2; if they were 0 and 2, 1 and 2, that would be a problem.

"Look, I strike out. They say you have to give something to get something, and I give the strikeouts for the power numbers." He shrugs. "That's who I am."

## Merry Kris-mas

Bryant is 10 months older than Bryce Harper. Like Bryant, the Washington Nationals' phenom is from Las Vegas. They played on rival high schools and could not be more different in their personas: Harper has been brash since he was a kid, while Bryant was "straight out of an after-school special," says Derek Stafford, his coach at Bonanza High. "I never had anything close to a problem with him. Maybe once he threw his helmet. Maybe."

Mike Bryant raised his son to play the game that way. The elder Bryant gets riled up talking about the yapping, bat-flipping young stars in today's game like Jose Fernandez, Yasiel Puig, and, yes, even Harper. (Though Bryant respects the Harper family.) "If my son were blowing kisses out there," Mike says, referring to one of Harper's minor league antics, "I'd pick up the phone and call the manager and tell him to get my son off the field."

Kris rolls his eyes at his dad's old-school mentality. "I like Bryce. He's only been supportive of me," Kris says. He adds, "I personally think all that stuff is good for the game. It's what brings people to the game. You want to watch the guys like Bryce because you don't know what's going to happen next. I'm just not going to be one of those guys."

Bryant did find himself in the middle of a controversy this spring, when the Cubs sent him to Triple A to start the season. Prevailing opinion was that the Cubs were delaying his service time in order to retain Bryant's rights for an additional year before he becomes a free agent. Fans ripped the front office for not fielding its best team on Opening Day. Bryant's agent, Scott Boras, complained loudly, and the players' association called it "a bad day for baseball." Bryant would only say that he was "extremely disappointed." Now he says, "I'm glad I went through it. I learned a lot, about getting through distractions and stuff from the media, and learning to deal with it while going about your job."

Now he can focus on the game, though he often feels giddy just being in the majors and facing pitchers he grew up watching: "The other day in Pittsburgh, it was A.J. Burnett, and I'm thinking, Man, I had this guy on my fantasy team in college."

The day after Kris-Mas, Bryant — following a game in which he walked three times, delivered a game-tying RBI single, and helped fuel a game-winning rally in the 11th when he legged out an infield chopper — walked into a darkened clubhouse, with smoke filling the room. The rookie was flustered. "I was like, What's going on in here?" he says. Then he heard the music and saw the disco ball hanging in the middle of the room. "It caught me off guard," says Bryant. "I'm like, Oh, this is how they celebrate a win up here in the majors? Well, that's pretty cool."

Kris Bryant still has much to learn. For the rest of the baseball world, that is a frightening thought. ■

STEPHEN GREEN FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

# We Rank the Top 10

GREATEST PLAYERS

DUNKERS

NBA FINALS GAMES

## and much, much more!

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# POSTER FACE-OFF

| ALEX MORGAN<br>USA and Portland Thorns, forward | VS. | ANTHONY DAVIS<br>New Orleans Pelicans, forward |
|---|---|---|
| 26 | AGE | 22 |
| 5'7" | HEIGHT | 6'10" |
| Diamond Bar, California | HOMETOWN | Chicago, Illinois |
| Baby Horse. She was given the nickname because she was the youngest player on the 2011 World Cup team and she ran with long, galloping strides. Morgan doesn't use the name very much any more. | NICKNAME | The Brow, or Unibrow. Davis's eyebrows run together, making it look like he has one big brow. He's embraced the look, as well as the name. He even trademarked the phrase "Fear the Brow." |
| Wears 13. Morgan chose it because she wanted to prove that the number is not unlucky. She also wears it to honor one of her idols, former national team star Kristine Lilly, who retired in 2011. | ABOUT THAT JERSEY NUMBER | Wears 23. Davis grew up in Chicago, so there's no mystery why: His favorite player is Michael Jordan. Even though MJ starred largely before Davis was born, he watched the Bulls' legend on highlight tapes. |
| Didn't start playing soccer until she was 13. Morgan played just about every sport you can imagine: volleyball, softball, basketball, track. She didn't join her first soccer club team until she was 14. Four years later she was playing for Cal on a soccer scholarship. | LATE START | Quit playing AAU in eighth grade and didn't start up again until he was a senior in high school. He went to a charter school known more for academics than hoops. (It didn't have a gym and the team practiced in the cafeteria.) Davis became a serious prospect when he grew seven inches before his senior year. |
| Won a gold medal with the national team at the 2012 Olympics. | USA! USA! USA! | Won a gold medal with the national team at the 2012 Olympics. |
| In addition to writing a series of young-adult books about soccer, she makes her own pink headbands. | ARTS AND CRAFTS | Likes to draw, especially cartoons. |

CARL SANDIN/BILDBYRAN/ZUMA WIRE (MORGAN); JOHN W. MCDONOUGH FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (DAVIS)

# ALEX MORGAN

## U.S. WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM FORWARD

## CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

**2015** Morgan became the 10th player to score 50 career goals for the women's national team when she found the net in a 1-0 win over England. She tacked on another goal in March to help the U.S. win the Algarve Cup in Portugal against several of the world's top teams.

**2012** At the Olympics in London, Morgan repeatedly came up clutch. After scoring the game-tying and game-winning goals in a victory over France, she assisted on the game-winning goal in the next three games. She then scored the latest goal ever by a U.S. women's national team player, a 123rd-minute strike to beat Canada in the semifinals. Finally, she assisted on the opening goal as the U.S. beat Japan 2-1 for the gold.

**2011** Just over a year after winning her first cap (or appearance with the team), Morgan became the first U.S. player to register both a goal and an assist in a World Cup final, in a heartbreaking loss to Japan. She had also scored in the semifinals to put the U.S. into the title game.



Photograph by
DAVID E. KLUTHO FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

Sports illustrated KIDS

JUNE 2015

Photograph by
LAYNE MURDOCH/
NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

# ANTHONY DAVIS

## NEW ORLEANS PELICANS POWER FORWARD

## CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

**2015** In his third season in the league, Davis took his game to an elite level. He led the NBA in Player Efficiency Rating, which measures a player's all-around game. He led the league in blocks per game (2.9), and his scoring average of 24.4 points per game was fourth in the NBA. Davis also took the Pelicans to their first playoff appearance since 2011, when they were known as the Hornets.

**2013** After the Hornets took him first overall in the 2012 draft, Davis had a solid rookie season. He averaged 13.5 points and 8.2 rebounds per game.

**2012** Davis spent just one season at Kentucky, but he accomplished just about everything a player can hope to. He won the Wooden Award as the country's top player and was named the Final Four Most Outstanding Player after leading the Wildcats past Kansas for the national championship. Kentucky finished the season with a record of 38-2.

Sports Illustrated KIDS

**FLYING HIGH**
You can really soar at Trapeze School New York, which offers lessons for beginners and beyond.

SUMMER FUN GUIDE!

# Swing into the SEASON

School's finally out! Whether you're chilling at home or hitting the road, we've got you covered. Here's how to make the most of your time off.

Photograph by
**Heinz Kluetmeier**
**For Sports Illustrated**

SUMMER FUN GUIDE!

# GET OUT AND GO!

## 25 Super Cool Things To See and Do

### WEST

CHEYENNE, WYOMING

**Cheyenne Frontier Days**

Have you ever dreamed of living in the Wild West? If so, mosey on over to Wyoming's capital for Cheyenne Frontier Days, which has been held for more than 100 years. There, you can look into the eyes of a gunslinger and go behind the scenes at the world's largest outdoor rodeo. There's something for every member of the family to enjoy, from parades to pancakes to Native American crafts. You can also watch the world's biggest rodeo contests, including bareback riding, bullriding, steer wrestling, and team roping. Don't forget to go on the Behind the Chutes Tour to see how the broncos and bulls are rounded up for the rodeo. Yeehaw! *(July 17–26)*

**– Isabel, Kid Reporter**

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

**Seafair Weekend**

During this three-day event, part of the 10-week Seafair festival, you can watch hydroplane races on Lake Washington, where the world's fastest powerboats compete in the Albert Lee Appliance Seafair Cup. I watched the races and viewed the boats up close from Genesee Park, on the banks of the lake. There's food, kids' activities, and live music, as well as the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels flying overhead for the Boeing Seafair Air Show. *(July 31–August 2)* **– Evan, Kid Reporter**

BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO

**Outdoor Fun**

*No snow? No problem! Speed down 2,500 feet of mountain on the Gold Runner Coaster or the Alpine SuperSlide. There's also zip-lining, mini golf, hiking, biking, rock-climbing, a human maze, scenic chairlift rides, and a trampoline.*

PLEASANTON, CALIFORNIA

**Scottish Highland Gathering & Games**

This 150-year-old event is a mix of traditional Scottish and Celtic games, and it takes place at the Alameda County Fairgrounds. It's a celebration of Scottish and Celtic culture that draws around 3,000 competitors and 35,000 spectators. There are musical competitions for bagpipes and drums, and the sports include old-fashioned versions of the shot put (with a stone) and hammer throw. *(September 5–6)*

**– Ryan, Kid Reporter**

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

**Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon**

This is a typical triathlon in that competitors swim, bike, and run. What's different is that you start on Alcatraz Island, which is the site of a famous prison (that closed in 1963), from which many prisoners tried to escape and failed. First you swim across the chilly San Francisco Bay. After you bike 18 miles, you then run an eight-mile course that takes you under the Golden Gate Bridge. *(June 7)* **– Ryan**

# MIDWEST

AKRON, OHIO

## All-American Soap Box Derby Championship

Since 1934, people from all around the world have earned a trip to Derby Downs to participate in this event, which now draws around 10,000 fans annually. (You have to earn points at other races or win a big local race to qualify.) Boys and girls age seven and up compete in four different divisions with cars they have usually helped build. First- through third-place finishers receive partial college scholarships, in addition to trophies. *(July 19–25)*

**– Aaliyah, Kid Reporter**

VALPARAISO, INDIANA

## Hoosier Bat Company

*The third-oldest wooden bat company in the country makes equipment for MLB players. Athletes who have swung a Hoosier bat include Miguel Cabrera, Prince Fielder, Bryce Harper, Frank Thomas, and Juan Uribe. If you call ahead, you can schedule a group tour or head to the showroom, where you can order a customized bat, sized perfectly for you.*

**– Matt, Kid Reporter**

HAYWARD, WISCONSIN

## Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame & Museum

My favorite part of this museum is climbing up through the 4½-story-tall musky (that's a type of fish) and looking out from the balcony located in its mouth. It's said to be the world's largest fish replica, and through the giant teeth, you can see for miles around. After that, climb back down and check out the Shrine to Anglers in the fish's belly.

**– Kirsten, SIK Senior Designer**

SYLVANIA, OHIO

## Historic Baseball

Sylvania's Black Swamp Frogs play our national pastime as it was played in the Civil War era — with replica uniforms and everything. Those on the team, which was founded in 1991, play for love of the game. Last year, the Frogs went 12-9-2 while competing at a variety of tournaments in Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan. Check out a game: This season runs through September 20.

**– Patrick, Kid Reporter**

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

## AVP Beach Volleyball

Olympic gold-medal-winning men's and women's beach volleyball players will compete in the AVP Chicago Open at Oak Street Beach. Along beautiful Lake Michigan, with Chicago's majestic downtown skyline as a backdrop, they will battle in this season's third-to-last event on the nation's preeminent beach volleyball tour. The tournament will be accompanied by music, food, and interactive activities, and general admission is free. *(August 28–30)*

**– Will, Kid Reporter**

WILLIAM MANCEBO/GETTY IMAGES (RODEO); TED S. WARREN/AP (POWERBOATS); CCSF PHOTO (HIGHLAND GAMES); NOAH BERGER/REUTERS (ALCATRAZ); COURTESY OF THE GREAT BLACK SWAMP FROGS BBC OF SYLVANIA, OHIO (BASEBALL); DAVID DERMER/AP (SOAP BOX DERBY); JOHN BIEVER FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (VOLLEYBALL); EMMETT BROWN/FISHING HALL OF FAME (MUSKY)

SUMMER FUN GUIDE!

## SOUTHWEST

DEMING, NEW MEXICO

### The Great American Duck Race

Any event that kicks off with a contest to see who has the best duck costume has to be fun, right? Over this four-day festival, you'll see actual ducks race on dry land and in the water. There's also a slow pitch softball tournament, a horseshoe competition, a parade, a carnival, and live music. Quack, quack! *(August 20–23)*

NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS

### Tube down the Comal and Guadalupe Rivers

*This is one of the best ways to beat the Texas heat. Take your own tube, or rent some at the many shops near the rivers. Each river has different routes you can take, so you can determine how long or short your float will be. Stay safe and have fun!*

**– Brian, Kid Reporter**

LULING, TEXAS

### Watermelon Thump

This tasty festival is made up of three events. The Champion Watermelon Competition rewards the person who has grown the biggest Black Diamond watermelon. Then there are the seed-spitting contests: one for kids and one for adults. (The Guinness World Record for seed-spitting is 68'9⅛" and was set in Luling in 1989.) Finally, there's the watermelon-eating contest. Everyone lines up at tables to see who can eat one slice of watermelon the quickest. It's four days of pure watermelon fun! *(June 25–28)* **– Kate, Kid Reporter**

SEDONA, ARIZONA

### Slide Rock State Park

There are kid-friendly hikes in and around this state park, seven miles north of Sedona, but the coolest thing is the 80 feet of rock that acts as a water slide. The smooth, red sandstone carries you down into a swimming area. If you're 12 or under, you can become a Junior Ranger by completing the activity sheet on their website and having a park ranger check your work.

## SOUTHEAST

BLUFFTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

### U.S. Junior Amateur

The game's top young golfers will meet at this prestigious tournament, first played in 1948. Who knows? You might see the next Tiger Woods (who won the event three times) or Jordan Spieth (who won twice). *(July 20–25)*

LAKE BUENA VISTA, FLORIDA

### U.S. National Jump Rope Championship

*O.K., so maybe you aren't a superstar rope-jumper. That doesn't mean you can't watch the best jumpers in the country show off their craziest tricks. There are speed competitions, relays, and double Dutch events.* ***(June 29–July 2)***

MARIETTA, GEORGIA

### College Football Hall of Fame

Mom and Dad *can't* get mad when you digitally paint your face through the magic of technology. Belt out your team's fight song (in a karaoke challenge), call a play in a broadcast booth, and sit at the ESPN GameDay desk like a real sportscaster. Get a feel for being on the field at the country's most famous stadiums with 360-degree video that makes you feel like you're in the middle of a marching band. Don't forget to visit the 45-yard field to kick a field goal, run through an obstacle course, reach the end zone, and complete a pass. Score!

CHINCOTEAGUE ISLAND, VIRGINIA

### Chincoteague Pony Swim

For the 90th year, local volunteer fire fighters will round up about 150 wild horses from Assateague Island and lead them across the Assateague Channel to Chincoteague Island. Residents believe the horses have lived there since the late 1700s, when a Spanish ship (carrying horses) sank just off the coast. A blueberry festival kick-starts the fun the weekend before, and people gather to kayak and swim in the channel before the horses start their journey. Afterward, some foals are auctioned to prevent overpopulation (and partly to raise money for veterinary care), and the rest of the ponies swim back home. *(July 29)* **– Tres, Kid Reporter**

CARIN KRASNER/GETTY IMAGES (WATERMELON); RONALD LEUNIS/EYEEM/GETTY IMAGES (DUCKS); CHRIS KEANE/USGA MUSEUM (GOLFER); DORLING KINDERSLEY/GETTY IMAGES (JUMP ROPE); MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES (WILD PONY SWIM); COURTESY OF CRVA/NASCAR HALL OF FAME (PIT STOP); AMANDA SWINHART/BOSTON RED SOX (PICNIC); JOE CARTER FILMS/PADDLE BATTLE (PADDLE BATTLE); NOLAN MCKEW/TRAPEZESCHOOL.COM (TRAPEZE); COURTESY OF TRACY FRARY (TRIATHLON)

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

### National Softball Hall of Fame and Museum

The NCAA Women's College World Series is played on the field adjacent to the museum. (This year, the CWS finals begin on June 1.) All summer long you can watch weekend tournaments and visit the Hall of Fame, which is open every day and honors players and others who have contributed to the growth of the game. The Junior Women's World Championship will take place August 9–15. It's a chance to see the best young players in the world — and to learn about the history of the game while you're at it.

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

### NASCAR Hall of Fame

At this hands-on museum, you can participate in the pit-crew challenge (pretend like you're working a real pit stop!) and drive in a simulated race. (You just have to be at least 4' 6" so you can reach the pedals, or you can sit on a parent's lap.) You can also be a race announcer, take a photo in Victory Lane, and pretend to wave a flag to start and stop a race. *Drivers, start your engines!*

## NORTHEAST

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

### Picnic in the Park

Can you imagine taking off your shoes and running around the field at Fenway Park? How about standing face-to-face with your favorite Red Sox players while getting their autographs? It's a special memory to last a lifetime, and it's all for a great cause. Picnic in the Park is a fan-friendly and family-friendly annual fund-raiser hosted by the Red Sox players and their wives. Attendees can enjoy a barbecue picnic on the field at Fenway, take pictures with the World Series trophies, line up for autographs with current Red Sox players, and bid on unique items and experiences in the live auction. The event benefits the Red Sox Foundation's Red Sox Scholars and RBI programs. *(August 2, one hour after the 1:35 p.m. Red Sox–Rays game ends)* **– Maxwell, Kid Reporter**

KENNEBUNKPORT, MAINE

### Paddle Battle

If you want to give a Father's Day gift your dad won't forget, go to the Paddle Battle, an event for all ages and levels. People use kayaks, paddle boards, canoes, and surfboards to race up the Kennebunk River and back to the Nonantum Resort. You can join in and paddle the 1.7-mile course or just watch. There will be live music, drinks, and barbecue! You can also learn how to use a paddle and a board. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Kennebunkport Fire Department. Win or lose, you will have a memorable Father's Day! *(June 21)* **– Manat, Kid Reporter**

NEW YORK CITY

### Trapeze School New York

Trapeze School New York is a place where kids and adults can learn how to fly. I went for my friend's birthday party and got a chance try out swinging on a trapeze. Although it is quite nerve-racking, it is an amazing experience.

**– Riley, Kid Reporter**

WEST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY

### Essex County Mini Golf Safari

*This is a family-friendly day to support the Turtle Back Zoo's Education Center. You can form a mini golf team with an adult and also enjoy a barbecue. Take a tour of the zoo while you're there!* ***(June 20)***

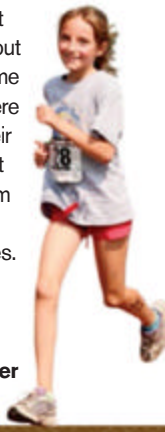
**– JJ, Kid Reporter**

HORSHAM, PENNSYLVANIA

### School's Out! Kids' Triathlon

Because of the short distances, this is a great and safe chance to try out a triathlon for the first time and a perfect atmosphere for parents to watch their kids. Those in the oldest age group, 12–14, swim four laps in a pool (100 yards) and bike 2.8 miles. Competitors then run ¾ of a mile to finish the race. *(June 14)*

**– Olivia, Kid Reporter**



SUMMER FUN GUIDE!

# Homespun Sports

We asked you for your best original summertime games. Here are our favorites. **BY SAM PAGE**

Illustrations by
**Andrew Roberts**

## S-W-I-M

Submitted by Cole

Have you ever played H-O-R-S-E on the basketball court? Or maybe its abbreviated barnyard cousin, P-I-G? S-W-I-M may not spell an animal, but it does spell your doom if you can't bring it from the high dive. Jump into the deep end of the pool using a flip, twist, pose, or any other trick you can think of. If the next person to hop in can't replicate the previous diver's trick exactly, he or she gets a letter. Players who get all four letters and spell SWIM are out, and the last person standing — er, swimming — wins. If you're playing at a pool with a basketball hoop, you can combine this S-W-I-M with a dunk contest to create an entirely different game: S-E-A-H-O-R-S-E.

## Slip'N Slide Baseball Submitted by Ryan Ludwick

No two yellow plastic toys provide more summer fun than the Wiffle ball bat and the Slip'N Slide. Here's how to get the most out of both of them. While growing up in Las Vegas, Ryan Ludwick, a 12-year veteran of major league baseball, honed his craft and beat the heat with this unique game. All you need to play is a Wiffle ball and bat and a Slip'N Slide, which should be laid at a 45-degree angle from home plate so that it can serve as the first base line. That way, when you get a hit, you slide down to first base, run to second, run to third, then return to the first base line to slide home. It differs from regular baseball in that you have to run across the infield from third to first before going home (and that the path to home is quite slippery). Just be ready for some close plays at the plate. Dramatic slides aren't just encouraged — they're necessary. Swimming trunks are preferable to baseball pants for this game. *— Interviewed by Brian Yancelson*

## Boogie Ball Submitted by Finn

The beach is tough sports terrain for one reason: sand. Those little tan specks make it hard to run and even harder to find a flat playing surface. That's why you need a sport that makes the sand work for you. Introducing: Boogie Ball. All you need is a few boogie boards and a round ball. First, map out a rectangular area with a half-court line. Then, at both ends, wedge two to four boogie boards (one per player) upright in the sand. The object of the game is to throw the ball and knock over the boogie boards. Whenever someone's board falls, that person is out. The first team to knock down all opposing boards wins. Defending players can also get the thrower out by intercepting the ball on the fly (though neither side can cross the center line). For a fun variant, try an amphibious version, in which the boards are wedged in wet sand and the ocean acts as a wild card — if the surf knocks your board down, you're out!

## Glow Hockey

Submitted by Gabriel

Nothing says hockey quite like the bright arena lights reflecting off the cool, white ice. But what are you supposed to do in the summer when it's too hot for ice and you want to play after sunset? You need a new kind of hockey stick: the glowstick. No, the little neon tubes of color aren't going to replace the sticks you use to move the puck. But with a glowstick on each goal post, a glowstick hanging from each player's neck, and a glowstick inside an empty water bottle instead of a puck, you'll be able to play on even the darkest of nights. Just remember: If you ring a wrister off the goalpost and shatter the glowstick, be careful not to get the glowing liquid on your skin.

# Heads Up!

## Abby Wambach and TEAM USA have one goal: to avenge a devastating defeat in the 2011 World Cup.

BY MARK BECHTEL

There's not a whole lot Abby Wambach hasn't accomplished. Since she first suited up for the U.S. Women's National Team in 2001, Wambach has scored more goals — 178 — than any other American player, male or female. She's won two Olympic gold medals. She's won an ESPY Award for Best Play. In April, she even went on *American Idol* to present host Ryan Seacrest with a U.S. jersey and an offer to be the team's waterboy in this summer's Women's World Cup.

There is one thing missing from that list, however. She's never won a World Cup. Oh, she's come close. Wambach was on the U.S. teams that made the semifinals in 2003 and '07. In '11, she put on an incredible display of clutch goal scoring. In the quarterfinals, she headed home a goal in the 122nd minute to send the game to a shootout, which the U.S. won. (It was the latest goal in World Cup history.) In the semifinals, she scored the game-winner against France with just over 11 minutes to play. And in the final game, she scored another extra-time goal, this one against Japan, to give the U.S. a 2–1 lead — and, seemingly, the Cup.

And then it all blew up. Japan equalized with just three minutes to play and won in a penalty shootout. Wambach and her teammates were devastated. "We felt like we were deserving of standing at the top of the podium," says forward Alex Morgan, who scored the first U.S. goal in the championship game. "And we weren't. There was another team there celebrating. It's stuck with me a lot since then. I'll forever remember that moment,

STEVEN GOVERNO/EPA/LANDOV (WAMBACH IN AIR)

## BY THE NUMBERS

A look at the stats you need to know before the World Cup kicks off.

and it's heartbreaking."

So, for the U.S., the 2015 Women's World Cup is more than a chance to bring home the most coveted trophy in women's soccer. It's a chance at redemption.

## A NEW ROLE

When Wambach played in her first World Cup, in 2003, she was a brash 23-year-old trying to help send a group of legendary veterans — including Mia Hamm, Brandi Chastain (*below*, celebrating) and Julie Foudy — out as champions. (Wambach had a habit of yapping so much that her teammates jokingly got her a shirt that read HELP! I'M TALKING AND I CAN'T SHUT UP!) She played well, scoring three goals, but the U.S. was shut out in the semifinals by Germany. "Boy, I thought I let my teammates down," says Wambach.

Now 35, Wambach has grown into the leader. She and captain Christie Rampone — the last holdover from the 1999 World Cup–winning team — are the ones the younger players are tying to send out on top. "Abby is a great leader, and for me personally, she's helped me a lot throughout my career," says Morgan (*above*, with Wambach). "She was one of my first friends on the team, kind of my big sister in a way. [She] wants me to succeed, and helps me in any way she can. She really is deserving of a World Cup title."

Wambach showed just how dedicated she is to the cause by deciding not to play in the National Women's Soccer League season that started in April. "At my age, putting those extra miles on my legs wasn't going to be the best thing for me to prepare for this World Cup," says Wambach. "My focus is completely and solely on the World Cup." So instead of playing, she has been training at Nike headquarters near her home in Portland, Oregon. Wamback has also been practicing with the Seattle Reign, the NWSL team that holds her rights.

**Morgan says the loss to Japan in the 2011 final "has stuck with me a lot. I'll forever remember that moment, and it's heartbreaking."**

Wambach's role on the team is different now. Morgan has taken over as the top goal-scoring threat, and Wambach has been coming off the bench of late. But she remains one of the most threatening players in the world. At 5' 11", she's a menace in the air. All four of the goals she scored in the 2011 World Cup were with her head. But she's more than just a big target. She's well-rounded, as evidenced by her six goals in the '07 Cup, which included one with her left foot, one with her right foot, one with her head, and one on a penalty kick.

If the U.S. is going to win the Cup, Wambach will likely play a large role. "[Winning] would mean so much, because it's been the thing I've been searching for my whole life," she says. "This is my last chance, and it's really special to be able to do it with this group of players."

FRIEDEMANN VOGEL/GETTY IMAGES (WAMBACH AND MORGAN); ROBERT BECK FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (BRANDI CHASTAIN IN 1999 WORLD CUP); DEREK COLE/GETTY IMAGES (CLOCK)

**0**

Times the men's or women's World Cup has been played on artificial turf before this year. More than 40 players around the globe brought a lawsuit against FIFA, the sport's governing body, for making the women play on artificial turf. These players said that it is unfair that they don't get to play on grass and have said that FIFA is discriminating against them because they are women. They dropped the lawsuit in January but are still not happy about it.

**24**

Teams in this year's World Cup, eight more than have participated in any previous year and twice as many as participated in the first Women's World Cup, held in China in 1991. (The men's World Cup includes 32 teams.)

**2**

Times the United States have won the Women's World Cup, in 1991 and in '99, when it was held in the U.S.

**7**

Different countries that have ever made the final of a Women's World Cup: Brazil, China, Sweden, Germany, Japan, Norway, and the U.S.

**5**

Time zones in which games will be played. Vancouver is in the same time zone as Los Angeles; Edmonton is in the same time zone as Denver; Winnipeg is in the same time zone as Chicago; Ottawa and Montreal are in the same time zone as New York; and Moncton is one hour ahead of New York.

# Meet Team USA

Get to know these amazing athletes.

Photographs by **John Todd/isiphotos.com**

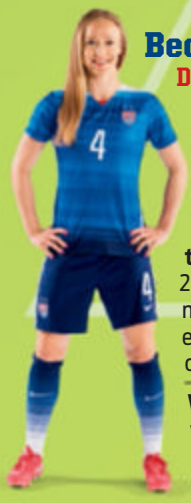
## Ali Krieger
**DEFENDER**

**Team USA's style of play is . . .** resilient.

**My role on the national team** As a veteran I feel like I have a responsibility to lead by example. I never get complacent with my position, and I try to improve myself every day.

**I can't wait to play . . .** Australia in the first group match because it is one of the most important games of the tournament!

**First trip to Canada** In college one winter semester, I visited my best friend/roommate/teammate at her home in Toronto. I had a great time!



## Becky Sauerbrunn
**DEFENDER**

**Favorite pump-up music** Anything as long as it has a good beat and I can move to it

**My role on the national team** It's changed since the 2011 World Cup. I've grown more into a leader and am expected to organize players on the field.

**Winning the World Cup would be . . .** like finding buried treasure and learning you could fly in the same day.

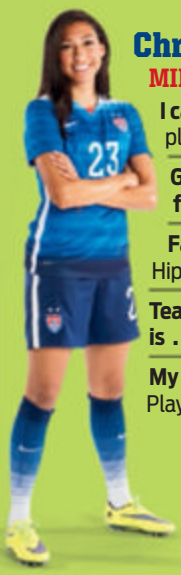
## Hope Solo
**GOALKEEPER**

**I can't travel without . . .** a reading light and a book and Goldfish to snack on.

**Favorite pump-up music** I need a mix of R&B, alternative, pop, and good old-fashioned rock.

**First trip to Canada** When I was 18 years old, I went for the Pan Am Games. And we won the gold.

**Team USA's style of play is . . .** a winning style!



## Christen Press
**MIDFIELDER**

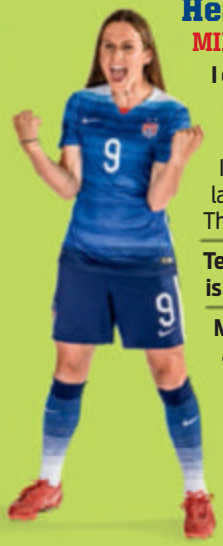
**I can't travel without . . .** my planner.

**Go-to activity on team flights** Scheduling

**Favorite pump-up music** Hip hop

**Team USA's style of play is . . .** overpowering.

**My role on the national team** Playmaker/finisher



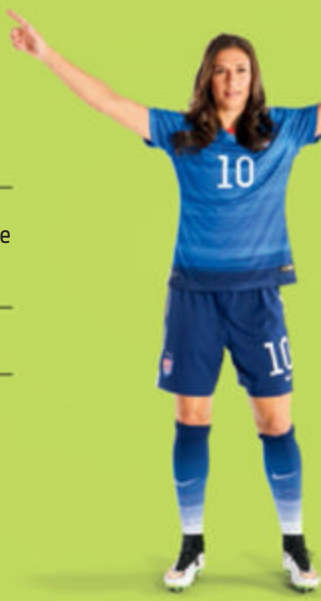
## Heather O'Reilly
**MIDFIELDER**

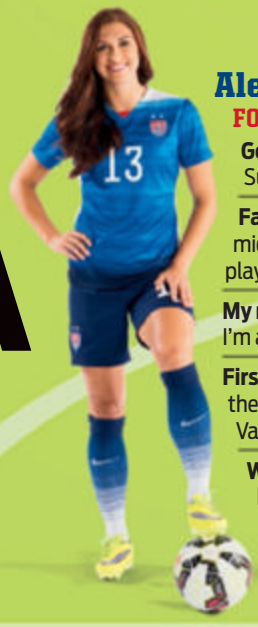
**I can't travel without . . .** something with chocolate.

**Favorite pump-up music** I have listened to the same song for the last 15 years: "Motorcycle Drive By" by Third Eye Blind.

**Team USA's style of play is . . .** aggressive.

**My role on the national team** I am a veteran player who brings a lot of energy and reliability to the field.





## Alex Morgan
**FORWARD**

**Go-to activity on team flights** Sudoku

**Favorite pump-up music** Whatever midfielder Lauren Holiday puts on her playlist. She's the music guru.

**My role on the national team** I'm a goal-scorer.

**First trip to Canada** When I was with the U.S. Under-17 team, we went to Vancouver.

**Winning the World Cup would be . . .** the fulfillment of dreams I've had since I was seven.

## Julie Johnston
**DEFENDER**

**I can't travel without . . .** my phone. I love looking through my photos or being able to text my friends and family during travel.

**Go-to activity on team flights** 1) sleep 2) doodle on paper 3) read

**My role on the national team** Being one of the younger players, it is important for me to continue to develop and grow, and to learn and embrace the identity that this team has created. As defenders, our role is to keep the team united on defense.

## Meghan Klingenberg
**DEFENDER**

**I can't travel without . . .** my water bottle and neck pillow.

**Go-to activity on team flights** I always download a good book. I also try to dominate the sudoku puzzles on every plane before we land.

**First trip to Canada** Niagara Falls with my grandparents. We used to go every few years. It was some of the best trips of my childhood.

**Winning the World Cup would be . . .** the realization of my childhood dream.

## Carli Lloyd
**MIDFIELDER**

**I can't travel without . . .** my Chap Stick and earplugs.

**Favorite pump-up music** Maroon 5's "Sugar"

**Team USA's style of play is . . .** exciting.

**My role on the national team** Veteran, leader, and quarterback of the team

**First trip to Canada** I have been a few times with the national team (friendly games and 2012 Olympic qualifying), and I have taken a trip to Niagara Falls.

## Megan Rapinoe
**MIDFIELDER**

**I can't travel without . . .** my water! *Rolling Stone* magazine. And *Dwell* magazine. And hand sanitizer. And gum. And Chap Stick.

**Go-to activity on team flights** Listening to "This American Life," a podcast about any and every topic you can think of

**Team USA's style of play is . . .** dynamic.

**My role on the national team** Connect passes, be creative, plate up assists, and occasionally knock a few home myself.

## Abby Wambach
**FORWARD**

**Team USA's style of play is . . .** fearless.

**My role on the national team** Leader

**Favorite pump-up music** I like slower music. It gets me in touch with my emotional side. Someone like Sara Bareilles.

**First trip to Canada** My family has a place in the Thousand Islands just above New York. We vacation every year in the Canadian waters up there, on the St. Lawrence River.

**Winning the World Cup would be . . .** bomb.

# OTHER KEY PLAYERS

## Christie Rampone
**DEFENDER**

**Team USA's style of play is . . .** creative.

**My role on the national team** To make sure everyone is confident on and off the field. And to keep the pulse of the team to tell the coaches how everyone is doing.

**I can't wait to play . . .** Brazil. They have such an individual flair. We played them in December and we want another shot at them.

**Winning the World Cup would be . . .** the best 40th birthday party ever. I turn 40 on June 24, and the final is on July 5.

## Amy Rodriguez
**FORWARD**

**Go-to activity on team flights** Watching TV shows on my iPad

**My role on the national team** Goal-scorer

**First trip to Canada** Youth national team camp, probably 10 years ago

**Winning the World Cup would be . . .** awesome!

## Sydney Leroux
**FORWARD**

**Go-to activity on team flights** Sleeping! I can fall asleep anywhere.

**First trip to Canada** I lived there until I was 14! My mom is Canadian, and my dad is American, which gives me dual citizenship.

**The Canadian specialty poutine (fries with cheese curds and gravy) is . . .** delicious! Every time I go home to visit family, that's one of the first things I get. Two words: Ah - Mazingggg!

# All in the Family

They already shared a passion for the game, but for three years father and son RON and R.J. HUNTER worked together toward the same goal – and it was pretty special.

**BY LAUREN SHUTE**

Photograph by
**Pouya Dianat for Sports Illustrated**

Only 2.7 seconds remained on the clock when Georgia State junior guard R.J. Hunter nailed a three-pointer to upset the third-seeded Baylor Bears in the 2015 NCAA tournament. In the midst of the ensuing madness, all eyes fell on R.J.'s father, coach Ron Hunter. He had literally fallen out of his seat.

Ron sat on a rolling stool to coach the 14th-seeded Panthers against Baylor, wheeling up and down the sideline because he had torn his Achilles tendon four days earlier — while celebrating the conference tournament title that sent Georgia State to the Big Dance for the first time since 2001.

His son's 30-footer against Baylor opened the book on one of the best Cinderella stories of the tournament, and it was the perfect culmination of a relationship 21 years in the making. After learning to balance basketball and family, the

***HUGE SHOT FOR THE UNDERDOGS***
Georgia State pulled one of the NCAA tournament's biggest upsets when R.J. sank this three, which sent his elated father tumbling to the court.

Hunters had combined to produce one of the biggest wins in Georgia State history. It was a father-son moment to cherish.

## A HEAD FOR HOOPS

Ron Hunter made an early bid for his son to play hoops: When R.J. arrived home from the hospital, dad placed a Nerf basketball in his newborn's crib. But Ron, who had begun his career as a college coaching assistant six years before R.J. was born, never coached any of his son's teams and tried to refrain from being pushy.

"I never wanted to pressure my son into playing, so I was always just dad," Ron says. "I let him enjoy it. That was hard, but I thought he would love the game more if other people coached him."

It didn't take long for R.J. to develop a passion for the game. By his fourth birthday, not only was he watching basketball constantly, but it was also quickly becoming apparent that he was talented. Even as a kindergartener barely strong enough to get the ball to the rim, he found ways to sink jump shots.

During his son's AAU career, Ron, who had become the head coach at IUPUI in Indianapolis, remained willing to help in any way possible. And as R.J. grew into his 6'6" frame, he trusted his father's guidance. R.J. listened to the advice his dad gave him when the duo spent time together, often trying to mimic Reggie Miller's late-game heroics — the hometown Pacers' star was a favorite of R.J.'s — or watching film.

"We always watched with a coach's perspective," says Ron. "I would ask why a coach took a player out or why a team was in a certain defense. We spent more time with stuff like that than we did on his skills because I wanted him to be cerebral."

By the time R.J. was a junior at Pike High School in Indianapolis, he was a three-star basketball recruit with a developed skill set and high basketball IQ. But Ron, who left IUPUI for Georgia State that March, never recruited his son. One of his assistants, however, did.

"The first time I came on a visit [to Georgia State], the team accepted me and took me in, so I thought it was the right place for me to be," says R.J., who committed that May. "The fact that my dad was the coach was the main part [of my decision], but I liked the kids here. If I had been at a different school where people were jealous about me being the coach's kid, then it would have been different."

At first the Hunters struggled to navigate the newest development in their relationship. "People think it's easier when he's your best player, but it's definitely not," says Hunter of R.J., who led the team in scoring for three straight years. "It's harder. The standards go up, and he had to set an example. There were times I'm pretty sure he wanted to give up, and it was harder for me as a dad."

But in a short time they figured out the balancing act, with Ron realizing how he could watch R.J. as a dad and a coach. "When we got it down pat, it came pretty easy," says R.J. "We've definitely gotten closer."

## APART, BUT STILL TOGETHER

After Georgia State's Cinderella run ended — the Panthers lost to Xavier in the next round — R.J. decided to declare for the NBA draft. (He's projected to go in the late first round.) Though the decision means that he will no longer be playing for his dad, it means the Hunters will be able to go back to just being father and son, supporting each other's every move on and off the basketball court, no matter how practice goes each day.

"The postseason was unbelievable. It was so cool to see him coach in that environment," says R.J. "The momentum going forward is my favorite part, though. Our experience is something that will catapult this school for years to come." ■

TOMMY GILLIGAN/USA TODAY SPORTS (R.J.'S SHOT); BILL FRAKES FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (RON ON STOOL)

# Fashion FAIL

We asked you to send us the ugliest uniforms you could imagine, and you delivered!

## A For Effort

These unis were the best (worst?) of the bunch. They're creative, clever, and downright awful looking!

**Cat's Meow? Definitely Not**
John, 11, Texas

**Unicorn Math**
Andrew, 10, Georgia

**Can You Find The Basket?**
James, 14, Virginia

**Super Spangled**
Carson, 11, California

**The Jersey Says It All**
Michaela, 13, Canada

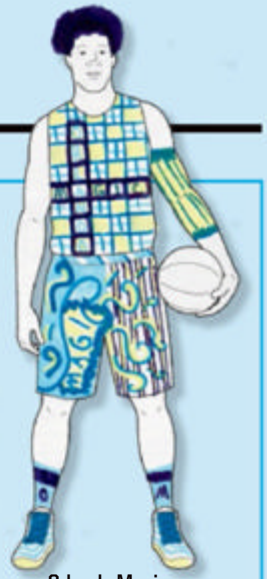
## Professional Teams

We can totally see the Cavs wearing these new duds this Christmas, but we aren't so sure the Celtics will have much luck in theirs. Does anyone else have a sudden urge to play checkers?

**Cleveland Cavaliers**
Brett, 13, Wisconsin

**Boston Celtics**
Cameron, 13, Massachusetts

**Oakland Raiders**
Abby, 12, Maryland



**Orlando Magic**
Josh, 15, Michigan

## College Teams

Hey, Nike! Oregon needs more uniform combos, don't you think? O.K., O.K. Maybe not. But major pun points for the most wicked uniform submission, and we think the touch of camouflage is sure to deceive Notre Dame's opponents. Or make them run the other way?

**Oregon Ducks**
Tommy, 10, Ohio

**Oregon Ducks**
Benjamin, 7, Kansas

**Wichita State Shockers**
Max, 10, Virginia

**Notre Dame Fighting Irish**
J.J., 13, Illinois

**Clip Art Cluster**
Steven, 12, Virginia

**What, No Pot Of Gold?**
Hope, 12, New York

## Say Cheese!

Dairy lovers of the world rejoice! These submissions were by far the cheesiest we received (though they're still not as cheesy as this joke).

**Green Bay Packers**
Daniel, 12, Tennessee

**Wisconsin Cheddars**
Jim, 11, Maryland

**Like What You See?**
Be sure to check out more favorite uniforms on our website at **SIKIDS.com/uglyuniforms**

FROM THE PAGES OF
Sports Illustrated

# Ga

**The top player in the class of 2016, Missouri high school star Jayson Tatum could play for any college in the nation. But the draw of his family – not to mention a certain variety of pizza – could lead him to stay in the city that he loves.**

**BY JOAN NIESEN**

Photographs by
**David E. Klutho**
For Sports Illustrated

# *Home* me

**MARCH 14** was one of those almost-spring Missouri mornings that flirts with warm, and two lines, each 100 people long, snaked through the parking lot. It was an hour and a half before tip-off at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, and the queue wasn't moving yet. Each time the sun slinked behind a cloud, two teenage boys shivered, clutching their arms to their chests. But they wouldn't dare budge.

"Have you seen his girlfriend?" one asks the other. "Do you know what kind of car he drives?" No detail of Jayson Tatum's life is too mundane to ponder. He is the reason they — and everyone else — are here. His Twitter account, @Im_that_dude22 has more than 13,000 followers. A highlight clip from his sophomore season has been viewed 40,000 times, and when he made his official visit to Duke in early March, the Cameron Crazies chanted his name. Jayson is the best high school basketball player in the class of 2016, and some analysts say he is the most talented player to come out of Missouri. (Other notable hoopsters to emerge from the Show Me State include Naismith Hall of Famers Ed Macauley and Bill Bradley, as well as current NBA players Tyler Hansbrough and David Lee.) Today his team — Chaminade College Prep, an all-boys' school from suburban St. Louis — is playing in a state quarterfinal game.

Then Jayson arrives, unfolding his 6' 9" (and still growing) frame as he steps off Chaminade's bus. At just 200 pounds, he's downright skinny, and though his legs are solid, his spindly arms are reminiscent of a young Kevin Durant. His play, too, draws comparisons to the Thunder forward's. On this afternoon, the show he puts on will be worth the chilly wait. Although his 18 points in three quarters don't come close to his season averages — 26.1 points, 10.7 rebounds and 3.4 assists — he shows the flashes of dominance that leave college coaches starry-eyed. A combo guard, Jayson is known — and sometimes chided — for his selflessness, and there are still moments in Chaminade's 70–47 victory when he has an open shot but defers. On several drives, though, he's unstoppable, pushing the ball up the court, shedding his defender, and dropping in a perfect step-back jumper.

A week later Jayson's high school off-season will begin two days too soon, when Chaminade loses in the state semifinals, but he has USA Basketball activities to attend, AAU ball to play — and a college to pick. He has narrowed his list to 10 — Arizona, Connecticut, Duke, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Saint Louis and Wake Forest — and he'll soon cut that number in half, with the goal of committing before November. Tar Heels coach Roy Williams has attended several of his games,

and the Blue Devils' Mike Krzyzewski has called him a "special player." The biggest names in basketball want Jayson in their uniforms, and the pull to go to an elite program is strong. But to spend even a few minutes at one of Jayson's games is to realize: St. Louis is tugging back just as hard.

**JAYSON'S FATHER,** Justin, was a basketball star at Christian Brothers College High (CBC) in St. Louis. He played at Saint Louis University, as did his best friend from high school, Larry Hughes, who was selected eighth by the 76ers in the 1998 NBA draft. Jayson's mother, Brandy Cole, had just graduated from University City High when she learned she was pregnant, and she and Justin had already broken up. Passing up volleyball and academic scholarship offers at Tennessee, among other schools, Cole opted for an affordable education at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, putting her savings toward day care and car insurance.

When Jayson was born on March 3, 1998, SLU was preparing to play in the NCAA tournament. Cole had sole responsibility for Jayson in his early years, which is why her little boy's first memories of basketball are not of watching his father's games, but of playing some aquatic pickup ball himself. "We had a suction cup basketball hoop on the wall [of the tub], and I would shoot for hours," Jayson says. "I think I was pretty good at that."

Bathtub hoops gave way to YMCA ball and eventually to pickup games with Hughes and Justin, who played in the Netherlands for about two years after leaving St. Louis. He returned to the U.S. in 2006 and coached his son in AAU until Jayson was 14. As Jayson grew, Justin made sure his son developed ballhandling and perimeter skills, and by the summer before Jayson entered high school, he was considered one of the country's top eighth-graders.

He was also at the perfect school; Chaminade has produced Bradley Beal, a longtime family friend who now plays with the Wizards, as well as Warriors forward David Lee. But in 2013, Justin got the coaching job at his alma mater. He had dreamed of coaching his boy at CBC, but transferring schools would have meant sitting out a year, and so father and son became rivals. (Jayson's team has won three out of the four games the two schools have played.) Still, Justin hopes to see Jayson play at his college alma mater.

**IMO'S PIZZA,** a variety unique to St. Louis, has a cracker-thin crust, and its provel cheese clings to the roof of the mouth. It's polarizing. Outsiders find it revolting. It's like eating cardboard, they say. But if you're from St. Louis, you'd sell your pinkie for a piece.

Jayson loves Imo's. When he returns home after a trip — he's been to Uruguay and Dubai with USA Basketball teams — it's the first thing he eats. When he's in town, it's on his plate three times a week. Asked about the benefits of staying in Missouri for college, Imo's — and his dog, Lennox — top Jayson's list. He just loves St. Louis as much as its pizza, and when he dreams of his first NBA paycheck, he imagines buying Cole a house — albeit with a catch. He's lived in the same home in University City since he was two, and he doesn't want to go anywhere else. He'll knock the house down, he says, and cram something bigger onto the lot. Cole, now a lawyer, laughs. "That's not how property value works," she tells her son.

Jayson has grown accustomed to certain things:

## *Jayson* Tatum

**Three years ago Jayson was an eighth-grader, and three years from now he'll most likely be in the NBA. When told this, his eyes pop.**

COURTESY OF BRANDY COLE (LEFT)

UPPER HAND
A two-time state player of the year at Chaminade, Jayson has won three of four matchups against his father, Justin (in purple), coach at Christian Brothers College High.

the house, the pizza, his family at each of his games. Before Chaminade's quarterfinal win, his grandmother Kristie Jursch was one of the first in the building, staking out a section of bleachers for her party of 30. Aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents — none would miss even one of Jayson's games, and most sport a red-and-black T-shirt that Cole has had made. Jayson has come to expect the crowd, his mother's hollering, his father's eyes following him on the court, dissecting every possession. That's basketball. That's home.

Jayson has heard for years the tales of Justin's and Hughes's era at SLU, when record crowds filled the Scottrade Center in Billiken blue. Both Justin and Hughes were initially headed out of state, but when Hughes's brother's heart condition worsened, they committed to the Billikens and to Spoonball, as former SLU coach Charlie Spoonhour's style of play was termed.

Justin knows, though, that SLU no longer has that certain hoops cachet, and that his son's USA Basketball friends wouldn't understand the appeal of Saint Louis. But if Jayson were to sign with a Missouri school, Justin says, it would become a destination. "Be a trendsetter," Justin says. "You don't have to go on this road because it was made for Shane Battier or Grant Hill. You can do what they did — at home."

Hughes, too, endorses SLU. Just as he does with his critiques of Jayson's game, he filters his opinions through Justin. Hughes, who runs a fitness club in Atlanta, remembers how many voices were in his ear when he was 17. He doesn't want to distract, but he makes his feelings known to Jayson. "I always preach home," Hughes says.

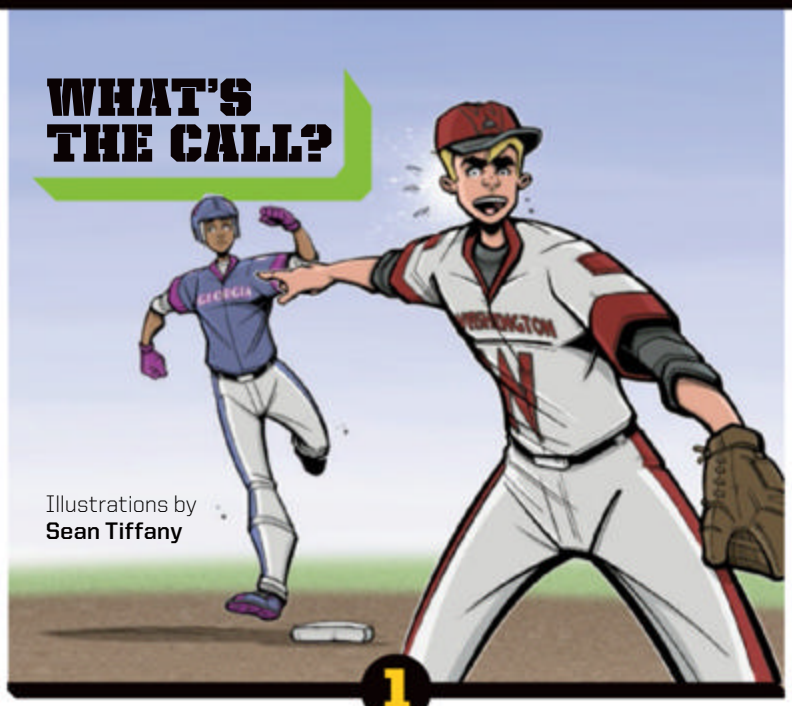
But home has its drawbacks. Missouri and SLU went a combined 20–44 in 2014–15. Kim Anderson, formerly of D-II Central Missouri, is the Tigers' third coach in five years, and SLU, under Jim Crews, who took over for Rick Majerus in 2012, lost to Duquesne in the first round of the Atlantic 10 tournament. Plus, neither has been as committed to recruiting Jayson as Justin would like. When out-of-state coaches are in the stands and Anderson and Crews are missing, Jayson notices. Still, Justin and Cole tell their son to go where he's comfortable. Corey Tate, Jayson's AAU coach and a former SLU guard, has a feeling that the teenager will make an unconventional choice and shock the basketball world.

**AFTER CHAMINADE'S** quarterfinal win, Jayson is slow to leave the locker room and make his way up the bleachers. He has his baby half sister, Kayden, to bounce and his dad to greet. Jursch intercepts him for congratulations, and there are aunts and great-aunts, grandparents, cousins and friends to high-five. There are autographs to sign, too, which Jayson does willingly, and he smiles wide for photos with strangers. He handles the requests with grace, making it easy to forget that he's just a kid who gets to school at 6:30 a.m. to shoot hoops, who has a math tutor after the final bell rings, whose baby sister wants a hug.

Three years ago Jayson was an eighth-grader, and three years from now he'll most likely be in the NBA. When told this, his eyes pop. He remembers the advice Beal has given him: "[It's] tempting to look too far ahead," Beal says. "None of us knows what our future holds. You have to enjoy the moment."

At this moment, Cole is hollering the address of a barbecue joint near Chaminade's game, and Jayson's girlfriend, Toriah Lachell, is showing off a picture of her prom dress. Hoping the autographs are over, Jayson walks Toriah to her car at the back of the lot. The two duck between vehicles, and Jayson hugs Toriah against the trunk of her car. They stand still, normal teenagers for a few moments. □

# END ZONE




Illustrations by **Sean Tiffany**

1

## NO BACKSIES

Georgia Gems catcher Joe Ford hits a home run out of the ballpark against the Washington Willows. Ford tags first base, but misses second. When his foot touches third base, the Willows' first base coach signals to the umpire that Ford did not tag second base. Ford runs back to second, but the Willows argue he cannot retreat. You're the umpire. Can Ford go back to tag second base before heading to home plate?

2

## ROLL PLAY

During Lynne Edison's first swing at a golf tournament, the head of her golf club falls off the shaft. While she's in her backswing, the head of the club rolls and hits the golf ball. You're the official. Does this count as a stroke?

ANSWERS ON PAGE 51

3

## ICING THE KICKER

Tennessee Terriers kicker Carl Moynihan lines up for a game-winning 41-yard attempt against the Missouri Monarchs. Just as Moynihan looks up for the snap, Monarchs head coach Bruce Baskerville calls a timeout to "ice," or disrupt, the kicker. Moynihan makes the kick, but it's waved off due to the timeout. As Moynihan prepares for his second attempt, Baskerville motions for another timeout. The Terriers claim the Monarchs cannot call consecutive timeouts to ice the kicker. You're the official. Can the Monarchs call two straight timeouts before an opponent's field goal attempt?

GAMES

# ALL-STAR PICTURE PUZZLE

Do these photos look the same to you? Look again. The original photo of Los Angeles Dodgers shortstop Jimmy Rollins and Arizona Diamondbacks third baseman Jake Lamb is on top. We made eight changes to the image on the bottom. Time yourself to see how long it takes you to find all eight.

Time Yourself!

SCORE:

OUT OF 8

## MYSTERY ATHLETE

**CLUE #1** The Mystery Athlete plays for the New England Patriots.

**CLUE #2** The two-time Pro Bowler set an NFL record for receiving yards by a tight end in a single season, with 1,327 in 2011.

**CLUE #3** The Mystery Athlete holds the all-time record for touchdowns by a tight end in a single season (18 in 2011). He is the first tight end in NFL history with three consecutive 10-plus touchdown seasons (2010–12).

THE MYSTERY ATHLETE IS:

## TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Golden State Warriors point guard Stephen Curry *(right)* led the NBA in free throw percentage (91.4%) during the 2014–15 regular season. Who is the all-time single season free throw percentage leader (98%)?

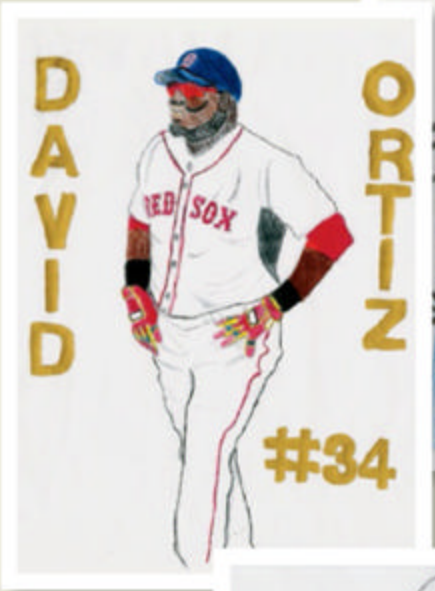
**A. Ray Allen**
**B. Jose Calderon**
**C. James Harden**

CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES (PICTURE PUZZLE); THEARON W. HENDERSON/GETTY IMAGES (CURRY)

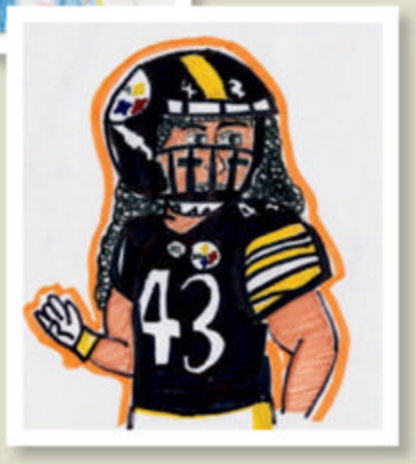
# ART GALLERY

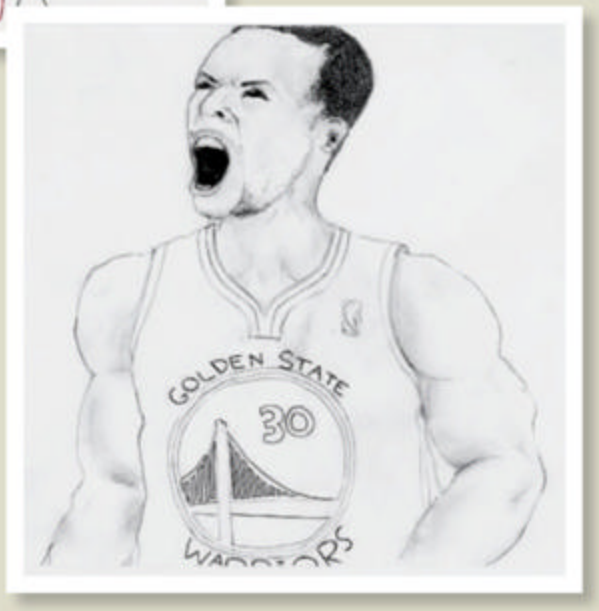
**Lionel Messi**
Noah, 9, Michigan

**David Ortiz**
Ari, 14, Rhode Island




**Troy Polamalu**
Lucas, 12, Virginia



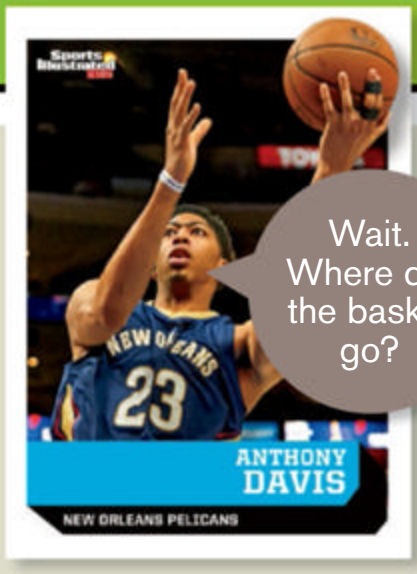




**Stephen Curry**
Barbara, 13, Wisconsin

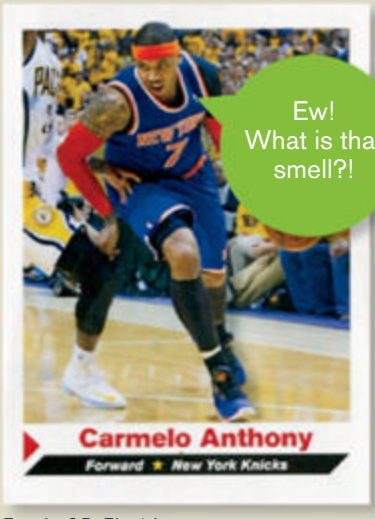
Send your drawings to: **ART GALLERY**, SI Kids, 1271 Avenue of the Americas, 31st Floor, New York, NY 10020-1393. Please include your name, address, date of birth, and the name of the athlete.

Send your cards to: **COMIC CARDS**, SI Kids, 1271 Avenue of the Americas, 31st Floor, New York, NY 10020-1393. Please include your name, address, and date of birth.

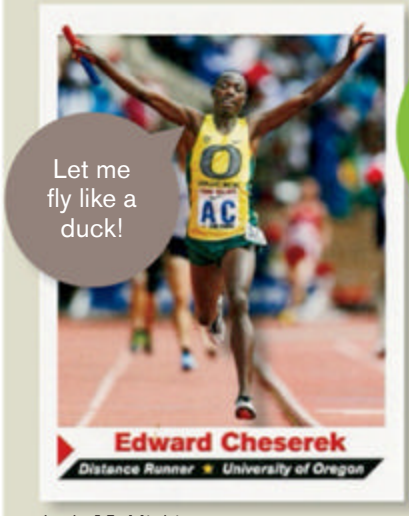
# COMIC CARDS



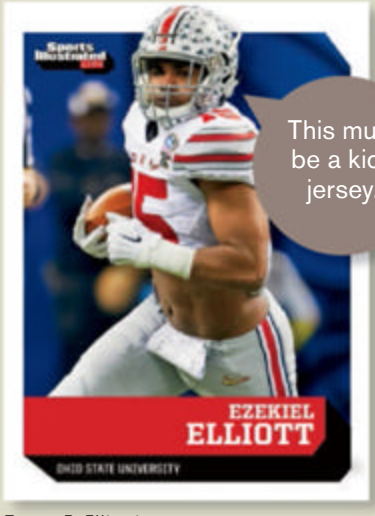

Jimmy, 11, Connecticut



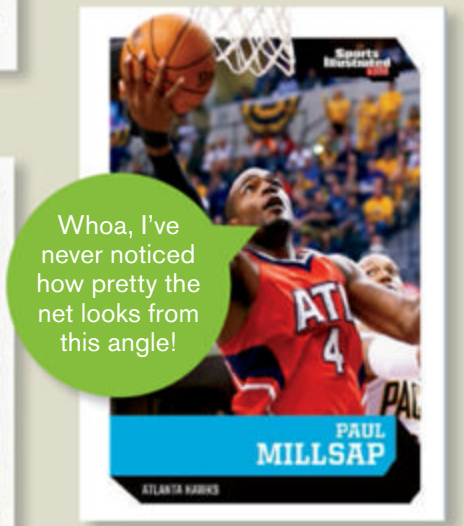

Brody, 10, Florida




Jack, 10, Michigan




Ryan, 9, Illinois




Henry, 11, Minnesota

# ANSWERS

**● What's the Call? (page 48)**

**1.** No. When the baseball left the stadium it, became a dead ball, therefore the runner cannot go back and tag a missed base after he has touched the next base.

**2.** It is not a stroke. According to the Rules of Golf, when the head of a golf club breaks from the shaft during a downswing, it is no longer considered a club. Because Lynne is no longer playing with a golf club, the stroke does not count. The ball is not in play, so there is no penalty.

**3.** When a team calls two consecutive timeouts in the same dead ball period, it will be penalized with a 15-yard penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct.

**● Picture Puzzle (page 49)**

The eight changes made to the photo are circled.

**● Trivia (page 49)**

B. Jose Calderon (2008–09)

**● Mystery Athlete (page 49)**

Rob Gronkowski, tight end, New England Patriots

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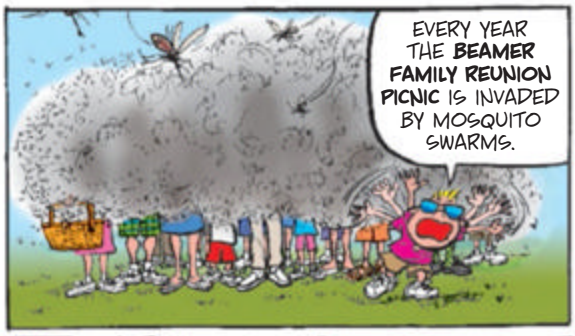
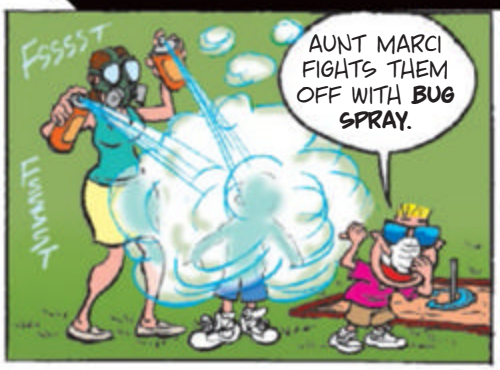
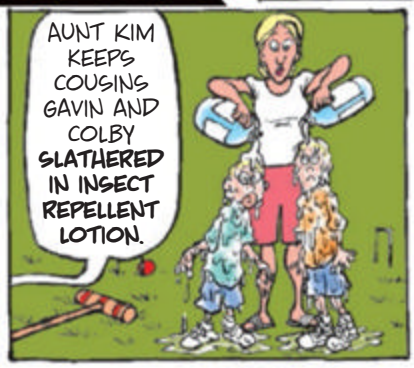
ROB FOLDY/GETTY IMAGES (GRONKOWSKI ACTION); COURTESY OF THE GRONKOWSKI FAMILY (GRONKOWSKI AS A KID)

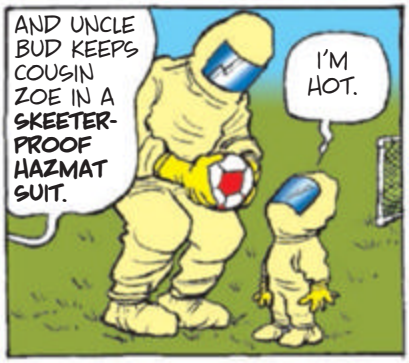
# BUZZ BEAMER

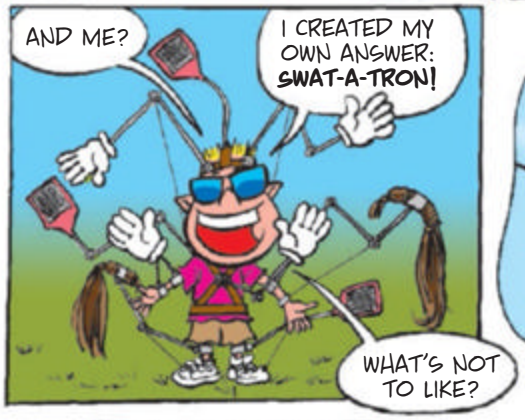
**By Bill Hinds**

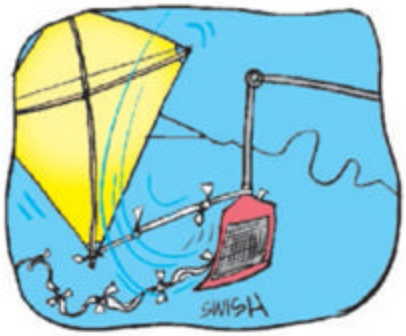


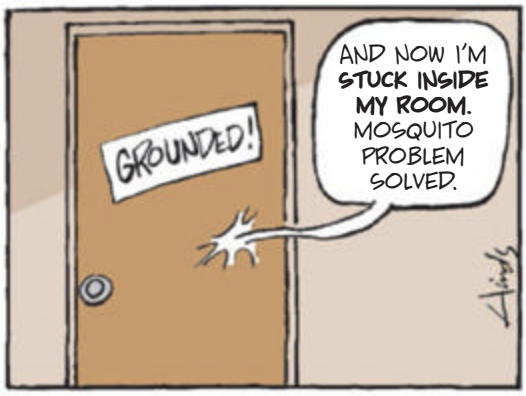







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